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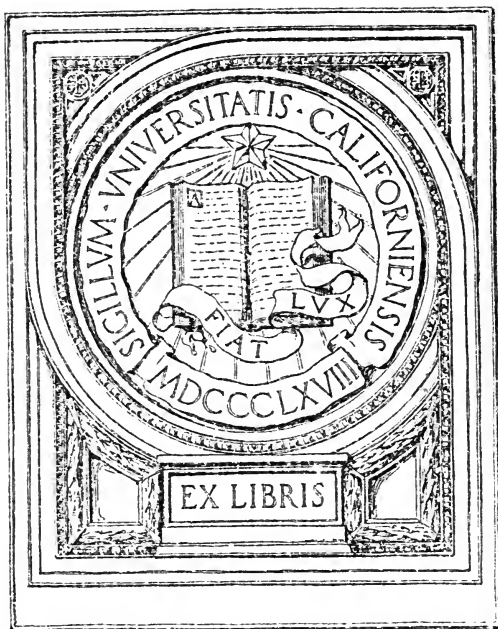


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G. G. Hayward.

July. 1859.

SKETCHES AND LEGENDS

AMID THE

MOUNTAINS OF NORTH WALES.

IN VERSE.

BY JANET W. WILKINSON.

LONDON:

T. & W. BOONE, NEW BOND STREET.

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LONDON :
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TO THE

CRITICS OF THE BRITISH PRESS.

I FEEL that a girl of fifteen cannot do better than dedicate her first literary effusions to you, in the hope that, profiting by your judgment in kindly pointing out her faults, she may in riper years produce something more worthy of your notice.

I am,

Your very obedient Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

Brymbo Hall,
22d August, 1840.

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SKETCHES AND LEGENDS

AMID THE

MOUNTAINS OF NORTH WALES.

CANTO I.

I.

Most glorious Wales! thou Eagle of the Rock!

That nestlest 'mid high mountains and wild streams,
Where mighty tempest's dread resounding shock

Alternate rules with sunlight's richest beams—
Hail! throned within thy realms of awe and might,

O'erlooking ocean—canopied by clouds;
Admit us to thy haunts of dusky night,

Where floating mist thy frowning grandeur shrouds!

II.

Dominion of the free! when from the chain
Of foreign victors Britain's chiefs withdrew,
Guarding with arm and life thy stern domain,
Which round the heroes like a fortress grew,
Secure 'mid towering cliff, or savage cave,
Or tangled mazes of recesses deep,
High o'er the foes they bade Defiance wave,
And still the baffled chase o'er deserts sweep.

III.

Now vale and hill are bright with joy and peace,
No echoes startle to the combat's din;
The vengeance and the strife of ages cease,
And Plenty reigns around, beneath, within!
There lurks no danger in the forests old—
There gleam no weapons in the distant glen;
Deserted stands each patriot's rugged hold,
And flocks lie scathless by the wolf's lorn den.

IV.

The morn is come—the morn of light and song,
To lure us gently from our own loved home,
And whisper to us as we glide along,
“How sweet amid the mountain paths to roam!”
The dew is glistening on the bending grass,
The sun is beaming gladly from on high,
The green boughs rustle as beneath we pass,
And cloudless azure decks the distant sky!

V.

The air is redolent of summer flowers,
Opening their petals to the laughing day;
Earth ne'er seem'd fairer than amid these bowers,
Yet from their magic bounds we haste away;
But once again we backward turn our gaze
To take short farewell of these smiling shades,
E'en now illumined by the morning rays,
Then onward through the far-inviting glades!

VI.

Brymbo! dear Brymbo! with thy time-stain'd walls,
Thy sculptured portals, and thy shrine of yore,
O'er which the ivy like a mantle falls,
Scattering its tendrils o'er the carvings hoar,—
Adieu! a fleeting and short-lived adieu!
Utter'd with glances that gay Pleasure breathe;
Farewell thy yew-clad walks, and boundless view,
And roses that around the terrace wreathe!

VII.

Long through the fresh, sequester'd lanes we wind,
Glowing with hope, wild fancy, and glad mirth,
Where trailing buds have clustering circlets twined,
And blush along the dark, deep-furrow'd earth.
The fields are golden with the waving grain,
The streamlets babble gaily to the breeze,
Happiness seems to shine along the plain,
And ripening fruits hang thickly on the trees.

VIII.

Now, Wynnstay! comes thy wide, far-spreading park,
With its green bosom, grateful to the eye,
Stretching all brightly to the valley, dark
And shelter'd from the scorching beams on high.
Still through the old, rich-tinted trees we gaze
Down the wild vistas of th' encircling wood,
While startled deer and fawns, in sportive maze,
Fly from the knolls where they have browsing stood.

IX.

Through that enchanting and most fair domain
In summer hours have I full often stray'd;
Yet to each spot whene'er I come again,
It ever seems with beauties fresh array'd:
Smiling unto my pleased and wondering view
Some novel charm, I heeded not before;
The banks, the groves, still wear some softer hue,
The very skies a brighter radiance pour!

X.

Though, since my foot last trod its fertile bowers,
Dark shades have pass'd o'er all with weeping gloom,
The wing of Death has brush'd the princely towers, (1)
And Heaven sent forth irrevocable doom!
Along the stately paths a train hath wound
In funeral pomp, with noiseless step and slow,
Thousands have throng'd in long lament around,
And mingled in one sob of heartfelt woe.

XI.

There need no proud memorials here to tell
The worth of him whose noble soul hath fled;
His deeds outlive him, and for ever dwell
His loftiest monuments; his virtues shed
A veil of hallow'd radiance o'er his name:
While still responsive from each mournful breast,
And from a grateful country, swells his fame,
Who was of Cambria's sons the first and best!

XII.

Sweet Nant y Bele! through thy calm retreat
I love to trace the wanderings of the Dee,
Whose silvery beams ne'er with the sunlight fleet,
But dance and sparkle still with wanton glee,—
Bounding along the rocks with liquid sound,
Greeting the drooping boughs with snowy spray;
Anon with placid ripple slumbering found,
Stealing along where'er the shadows lay.

XIII.

Most like the wanderings of the human heart,
First fresh and glad, as are these limpid waves,
And flush'd with glories that too soon depart,
Or linger sadly but in Memory's caves;
The music of its pulse grows faint and still,
And the path deepens into rayless gloom,
Then sinks away, as does that gleaming rill,
And glows no more on this side of the tomb.

XIV.

A tower doth o'er me now all massive rise,
Not more enduring than the deeds it drew
Its first creation from, for to the skies -
It rears its strength to honour Waterloo! (2)
I sit again beside its casement wide,
Following, with watchful eye, the distant vale,
And leaning on the old oak's chisell'd side,
With carved figures that from age look pale;

XV.

Rich as it is with plumed casque and shield,
Quaint mottoes, and elaborate device,
With bearded warriors panting for the field,
And fables with antiquity concise :
Here, too, grotesque old masks, with quip and beck,
Mock at the stranger from the sombre walls,—
Relics that Time hath spared amid the wreck,
Which, save these gothic fantasies, crush'd all!

XVI.

Again come back my former visions now
Of England's heroes and of England's boast,
And of that plain where verdant laurels grow,
Still wreathing round the proud, victorious host ;—
And that bright pennon, waving to the wind,
Has not its hue before been Conquest's sign?
Calling high dreamings to the lofty mind
That throb'd at its own spirit's flame divine!

XVII.

Memory of Waterloo! not dimmer yet
Beam thy stern glories to the eye of Fame:
Can British bosoms e'er thy claims forget,
While many a cheek grows crimson with thy name?
Crimson with still fresh joy and conscious pride
Of the brave souls that could so nobly fight,
And the high banner that the storm defied,
Unshaken as its country's sword-girt might!

XVIII.

Beside me stands a form whose martial mien
Betrays his history, when of old he fought
In that fierce struggle, for his glance is keen,
As if from flashing blades its light were caught.
Full many a scene of blood that glance hath scann'd ;
For who (that dwells in peace) may tell the lore
Of misery cull'd from each far distant land
Which o'er his memory doth in sadness pour?

XIX.

Not here his home: some quiet, shelter'd spot
In merry England claims the veteran's love :
But old companionship, which changes not,
Hath tempted him awhile from thence to rove ;
And seeking here a friend of other days,
To live with him his years of war again,
While o'er his brow the joy of conquest plays,
And glowing words depict the battle's reign.

XX.

Well pleased that o'er his head so proudly smiles

An emblem of the glory of his age,

He oft, with newer incident, beguiles

The careless hour, and many a varying page

Of truth uncloses, such, as now, with tone

Of fiery interest, to my listening ear

He doth relate ; his furrow'd face hath grown

Bright with the thoughts his mind re-summons here.

THE SOLDIER'S STORY. (3)

Mine is no tale of tragic woe,

Where high-wrought griefs fantastic glow,

Nor seek I Fiction's friendly art

To fire the soul or melt the heart.

No ! Truth shall guide my simple lay,

And lend her charms to cheer the way.

Were mine a Homer's matchless lyre,
To higher themes I would aspire ;
Would sing those deeds that grateful Fame
To distant ages will proclaim ;
Which shed new lustre round the brave,
That brightens life and mocks the grave !
Such shines in him, whose dauntless host
Is Britain's safeguard and her boast :—
Immortal WELLINGTON ! thy praise
Breathes not alone in minstrels' lays,
But in each heart the tribute dwells,
And every voice thy greatness swells ;
Thy name each high, rejoicing strain,
Blends with yon far and hard-won plain,
Where British swords with victory crown'd,
Turn'd Waterloo to hallow'd ground !

Oh, War ! how bright the guerdons that await
Thy hero's brow, with pride and hope elate,
When to his native air the banners stream,
And glittering steels flash forth a radiant gleam !
While pawing steeds champ o'er the trembling ground,
With happy thousands crowding swiftly round ;

When martial notes in liquid music rise,
And echoed fame in mellow cadence dies.
But dearer are the mingled sounds that greet
His ear from human lips,—ay, far more sweet
To hear his country's welcome load the gale,
And countless voices bid the conqueror hail!
Yet, though fond eyes with joy and triumph glow,
What are th' unheeded truths that lurk below?
They speak of those who cold and silent lie,
And hearts that sink beneath their misery;
Of scenes of blood, of lov'd delusions gone,
And many a home left desolate and lone!
These are the woes that rent yon distant land,
Where Nature's bounties blush on every hand,
And Earth has borrow'd from the glowing skies
A glory like their own celestial dyes.
The country of the olive and the vine,
These woes, oh, Lusitania!—these were thine!
When he, whose very life would almost seem
Some fabled tale—some wild and transient dream,—
He, who had rear'd an empire with his sword,
And sought to be the universe's lord,—

Who boldly fought on Egypt's fiery sands,
And led his troops to Russia's frozen strands :—
NAPOLEON ! cradled by the boundless sea,
Its rocks his home, its roar his lullaby !
He, in ambition boundless, mind as great,
Despising fortune and defying fate,
Rent kingdoms, as that ocean's wildest wave
Rends the high cliff when storms insatiate rave,
Engulphing all things in its raging deep,
While o'er its breast the circling eddies sweep !
He would have hurl'd thee to the nations' grave,
But British arms were there to help—to save !
Then, when to promised triumphs France was led,
How deep the griefs with which the Lusians bled !
For they must leave their dear—their cherish'd homes,
For distant cities' strange and crowded domes.
And must they now in weeping sadness fly
From all they loved, or linger but to die ?
Yes ! for the voice of War is on the blast,
And every burst comes nearer than the last.
Oh ! grant them but one short, one fleeting day,
Ere they shall speed them on their mournful way,—

One day, to mark the sun's ascending beams
Rouse the hush'd world from sleep to waking dreams,
Gild the far peak, and light the smiling vale,
Sport on the stream, and quiver on the dale,
And on the hoary mountain's brow diffuse
The glowing lustre of his rainbow hues!
Where every spot with Memory's sweets is rife,
And hallow'd by the by-gone scenes of life!
There, on yon bank, perchance, a careless child,
The sorrower pluck'd the blooming flowers and smiled;
Through yon wild pass, with footsteps sad and slow,
Led his tired mules to the loved home below;
Or, at his cottage door, with laugh and song,
Chased the gay evening's mirthful hours along.
Those happier times, alas! have vanish'd now,
And darker cares have dimm'd his thoughtful brow.
Why lingers he in this enchanting scene,
And what to him are woods and valleys green?
Alas! he sees not Nature's varied smile,
No more her charms his storm-rent mind beguile;
That it is home—dear home, alone he knows,
Soon his no more, the refuge of his foes!

He lingers but to weep a last farewell—
Hope's parting sigh, and Happiness's knell;
To treasure in his heart that fatal hour,
And call in anguish on th' avenger's power.
Hark!—heard ye not that shrill and warning cry?—
“The foe! the foe!—Fly! hapless loiterers, fly!”

The storm has raged itself to rest
On steep Busaco's frowning crest;
The thunder's roar has died away
From heights that trembled with the fray,
While far from peak to peak 'it rung,
From distant hill and valley flung,
Sent back with new, redoubled sound,
From lofty mountains piled around;
On every blast it louder came,
And pour'd some hero's meed to Fame!
Oh! sterner than the bolts of fire
That wing from Heaven their signals dire,
Flushing the earth with sudden light,
Blighting its fruits with ceaseless might,—
Each peal that now re-echoes here,
Gives hundreds to a glorious bier;

A bier with laurel-wreaths entwined,
In many a weeping heart enshrined ;
A memory by a nation hail'd,
A fate that nation's tears bewail'd !
That tumult wild is lull'd at last ;
The strife, the struggle almost past :
Save, now and then, a shot that breaks
The new-born calm, or tramp that shakes
The furrow'd earth ; and far below,
Where still the martial terrors glow,
There still the deadly lightnings flash—
There still the blades ensanguined clash !
But here the cries resound no more,
The battle's din is hush'd and o'er ;
Repose hath seem'd to sink around
The ghastly sight that strews the ground ;
As when the whirlwind sweeps away,
Wearied and sated with its prey ;
The goodly forest's honours green,
Rent from their hoary stems, are seen
Recumbent on the aged earth,
Crumbling to that which gave them birth.

The tender sapling, and the oak
That long has braved the tempest's stroke,
Lie thickly scatter'd, side by side,
Torn from each crest its noble pride ;
While crush'd beneath—ah ! who may tell
The hopes that wither'd as they fell !

A form is wending down the height,
That frowns beyond in darksome night,
And onward comes through savage hosts,
Thronging along their watchful posts.
It is a girl, whose youthful mien
Scarce seventeen fleeting years hath seen ;
Whose wayworn guise, and peasant dress,
The toils of poverty confess.
Her wearied look and tardy feet
Betray her from some far retreat :
Yet in her face the interest lives
Which Youth inspires and Beauty gives ;
The more when friendless sorrow seems
To mingle with life's earliest dreams,
And Innocence a halo throws
On childhood's hours, that just disclose

The promise of maturer age,
Expanding 'mid the tempest's rage.
With one small hand she seems to guide
A laden mule, that by her side
Obedient trudges ; and with gaze
Of love and faith doth frequent raise
Its glance to hers, as in surprise,
Or as in sorrow, that she flies.
While she, sometimes, will kindly press
Its long sleek ears with tenderness,
As if her feelings warmly cling
E'en to the love of that dumb thing.
Her mantle (wound around her brow,
Shading its rich and sunny glow,
And falling in long folds of night
Upon her form of beauty slight,)
Half veils the charms it cannot hide,
And flutters in redundant pride ;
Yet, oft escaping from its bound,
Her silken hair the light hath found,
Flickering and dancing on the gale
Like shadows swept across the vale.

How young she seems! not hers the mind
Inured by time, to fate unkind,—
Not hers the heart, whose every tie,
When rent, in sullen grief can lie,
And chill'd and warp'd by sorrow lone,
Shrink to its cell and freeze to stone!
Her face is like a summer cloud,
Which scarcely can the sunlight shroud,—
A silvery mist, that every breath
Wafts into fair and magic wreath,
Each moment varying,—every thought
A new expression there hath brought,
Of sadness or of mirth, to fleet,
Like strains of music, dying sweet,
O'er woodlands wild, at evening's close,
When drowsy sleep weighs down the rose!

Thus she advances, yet full oft
Looks round afar, with glances soft,
As if uncertain of her road,
And what these sights of fear may bode.
For she has reach'd a spot where still
The combat's fading horrors thrill;

Before, behind her, and around,
Foe meets with foe ; the heaving ground
Shakes with an army's mighty tread,
And trampling hoofs of chargers dread.
The clash of arms—the cannon's roar—
The sounds that in succession pour—
The mingled cries from foreign tongue,
Through the girl's aching brain have rung.
Sharp from the rifle hiss the shot,
Loud echoes boom from peak and grot ;
The bursting shells, with fragments dire,
Bear death upon their wings of fire,
And chattering wildly 'mid the rocks, —
Tear up the mountain with their shocks !
But she is scathless !—shot nor blade,
With grazing touch, hath her dismay'd :
It seems as if some viewless hand
Has stay'd them with a stern command,—
Has caught the bolts in midway flight
And bid their rage on others light !
No mortal's hand—no mortal's care,
But His, who, o'er that maiden fair,

Since infancy's first helpless hour,
Has spread the safeguard of His power,
And watch'd each path her footsteps trod,—
Whose care but His?—the orphan's God!
For she is friendless, since her birth
No love for her has shone on earth,
No pitying fondness dries her tears,
No kindred voice her silence cheers;
Nor can her memory ever trace
Faint record of a dearer face!
Is there not solitude on shores
Where gleam no sails, where sweep no oars?
And in the depths of desert isle,
Where all unseen earth's beauties smile?
Oh! that is glad to pang that dart
In desolation o'er the heart!
Yet she has turn'd, amid her grief,
And sought and found in Heaven relief.

Now slowly up Busaco's height,
Where British soldiers rest from fight,
She toils, and many a curious eye
Doth her approach amazed descry.

Surprise and pity, both in turn,
In each admiring bosom burn :
And she, with trembling finger, tells
Her holy beads ;—the sacred spells
Are moisten'd by her falling tears ;
Her agitated soul appears
To pour itself away in prayer,
Which to her forehead pure and fair,
Fresh beauty lends ;—lip, eye, and heart,
In the low-whisper'd sound have part.
Not that the anguish of alarm
Her mind dismays—she fears no harm ;
But scenes of blood ill suit the gaze
Of timid girlhood ; and the blaze
Of conquest, with its laurels proud,
From it is hid by danger's shroud !
She marks a kind and cheering smile
Mantle along each warlike file,
And sees no frown, for every brow
Wears a warm, sympathising glow.
As she from rank to rank hath pass'd,
There seems some hallow'd influence cast.

It is, in truth, a wondrous sight,
To see a girl so young and bright,
With trusting step and placid face,
And form whose every turn is grace,
Moving, with warlike thousands near,
In such a spot of awe and fear!

She gains the dark Sierra's crest,
And scans the onward valley's breast ;
But still in vain she strives to trace
The unknown path her feet must pace :
In vain—in vain she wistful tries,
Standing awhile in sad surprise,
Then slowly, but with gentle mien,
And bearing modest but serene,
She hastes the nearest group to greet,
And murmurs forth, in accents sweet,
Her simple, but still touching tale ;
How fugitive o'er hill and dale,
By the stern mandate, far from home,
Compell'd through dangers wild to roam.
An orphan, without hope or friend,
That can the wish'd assistance lend,

Save one high stay in Heaven above!
With none to help, and naught to love,
But this poor mule that feebly bears
Her little all! Her pearly tears
Glisten in her large, speaking eyes,
Whose eloquence hath no disguise;
And she inquires, which rugged way
Will thence to distant Lisbon stray?
Answer'd by many a kindly voice,
Once more her thoughts with Hope rejoice;
And, reassured from doubting pause,
Her mantle's folds she closer draws,
And passes from the battle-field,
For Heaven has been the Orphan's shield!

XXI.

His friend, a veteran, who had sat apart

When first the tale began, had long drawn near,
With growing interest. "My old soldier heart,"

He now burst forth, "such history to hear,
Has well-nigh melted, though unused to own
Narration's influence o'er the attending soul!

But this poor orphan,—did she toil alone

Thro' life's rude path, or reach some sheltering goal?"

XXII.

His comrade smiled; but ere he could reply,

Sweet music floated from the vale below,
And we could catch distinctly there on high
The breathings of a harp in cadence slow.

Up sprung the Welshman, and delighted glanced
On his companion; then ecstatic said,

"Now shall you be by Cambrian lays entranced,

For hear them streaming from the ravine's shade!"

XXIII.

“That strain!—I know it well; would that the words
 Could reach you too; they murmur of a theme
Which overjoys me like the clash of swords,—
 Now I recall their memory like a dream!”
He stood a moment, listening to the air
 The harper play’d; then with abstracted mien
He mutter’d forth the lay, while calm and fair
 Woods waved beneath us round the sylvan scene.

THE WELSH HARP.

There breathes a sound among the hills,
 I hear it wild and loud,
And in my heart an echo thrills,
 And stirring thoughts upon me crowd,
 Of Cambria’s ancient Harp!

Where are her sacred minstrels fled
Who once awoke the hallow'd lay?
The *last* was number'd with the dead
When on the conqueror's murdering day
Fell Cambria's slaughter'd bards!

Yet still a wild and plaintive note
Blends like a mournful wail;
And seems in sad regret to float
The minstrel's dirge o'er hill and dale,
From Cambria's ancient Harp!

Wake! thrilling chords!—oh, wake again
Beneath the harper's hand,
And with thy sorrowing for the slain
Breathe deep devotion to the land
Of Cambria's hallow'd Harp!

Oh! still through fancy's eye I view
Llewellyn lead his band,
Up mountain steep, to freedom true,
And struggle boldly for the land
Of Cambria's cherish'd Harp!

But now, that fearful strife is done,
Succeed these peaceful days
The Southron's martial power hath won;
Yet still are heard the mournful lays
Of Cambria's ancient Harp!

XXIV.

But noon is here, with all its burning sun,
Flashing upon the deep enshrouded vale;
Day's orb his loftiest throne in heaven hath won;
Faint whispers steal along the panting gale;
The deer forsake the wide and scorching glade,
And lave themselves within the crystal stream,
Or crouch'd beneath the cool, o'erhanging shade,
Sink gently into slumber's softest dream.

XXV.

And we, Llangollen! in thy vale of song
With blest enchantment pass the pleasing hours;
Deeming each moment, as we glide along,
Thy charms are borrow'd from some fairy bowers,
And still retain some sweet and potent spell
To lure the wanderer from his home of yore,
Within thy realms of life and light to dwell,
Till all that pleased of old delights no more!

XXVI.

Where'er I turn I view each favour'd spot
By Heaven in generous bounty richly blest,
From the bright flowers that wreathe around each cot,
To the far mountain's cloud-encircled crest.
Yes, Dinas Bran! (4) with upturn'd, wistful eyes,
I mark the crumbling of thy massive walls,
And think to hear once more the minstrel's sighs
Pour'd to the fair one of thy princely halls,

XXVII.

When Howel swiftly flew on Alban steed
To lay his laurels at Myfanwy's feet,
While sparkled high the song-inspiring mead,
His bardic lays were wont her ears to greet.
Alas! those gay inhabitants have fled,
With all their thoughts of chivalry and love;
And the stern tower, as mourning for the dead,
Frowns in most lone oblivion above.

XXVIII.

Sacred Valle Crucis ! thou deserted fane !

Half hidden by the tall, entwining trees,
Thy greatness all is o'er : no more again

Will chant or organ swell upon the breeze,
Or vesper's low and music-breathing bell,

Sounding at evening, reach the traveller's ear,
Like a celestial voice from that deep dell,

Murmuring a warning that life ends not here !

XXIX.

No more Llangollen's soft and dreamy vale

Sees the worn pilgrims throng in weary line,
With downcast eyes, and brow with travel pale,

To weep and worship at thy far-famed shrine ;
Or, wandering through the dark and moss-clad wood,
The cowlèd monks in silent sadness roam ;

Perchance, o'er their lone minds would oft intrude

Unhallow'd thoughts of worldly joys and home !

XXX.

Sinking like poison'd arrows to the heart,
With pangs too deep, and calling back again
Memories and hopes, from which the strife to part
Had been as death, torturing the harrow'd brain :
For crime like this, what penance must atone,
Of midnight worship and of vigils wild,
And supplications to the Heavenly Throne,
Rending the life-strings of Earth's sinning child !

XXXI.

Misguided men ! ah ! surely not for this
Spoke Heaven's pity unto mortal ears,
Promising glad eternity of bliss,
Only to make this world a vale of tears ?
No ! 'twas to soothe with faith life's dreary close,
As at this hour, when evening sinks around,
Sunset, with golden rays and hues of rose,
Spreads its rich smiles around the horizon's bound.

XXXII.

Farewell, Llangollen ! yet one more farewell,
As the sad notes swept from each lyre of old ;
Farewell ! the poetry of thy bright dell,
And the rapt songs that Time may yet unfold.
Never in dim Arcadia's woody maze,
Nor on the high Olympus' fabled brow,
Breathed there more lofty theme for poet's lays,
Than 'mid these dark and purple mountains now !

XXXIII.

Ah ! *here* at least our mighty Shakspeare's hand (5)
Has given the patriot's thrilling deeds to fame,
Sending his memory forth to every land,
And rousing distant ages with his name.
Owen Glyndower ! thou unforgotten chief !
Thy trace is stamp'd for ever on this spot,
Pressing upon the mind a fond belief
Of thy strange, stormy, and still wayward lot.

XXXIV.

Mysterious omens fearfully hail'd thy birth,
When blood sprang upward from the heaving soil,—
A warning that thy steps should still on earth
Be track'd in gore—memento of thy toil.
Thou wert but instrument of mightier wrath,—
A thunderbolt by hand Eternal thrown—
To scatter human pride, and in thy path
To blast the world with vengeance *not* thine own.

XXXV.

Yet thou, (unconscious of thy bounded power,
And that Unseen, who check'd thy onward flight,
Dashing thy fire in His appointed hour,
To the scathed ground, and healing every blight !)
Thou sought'st to tamper with a magic creed,
And arm thyself with shield of darker lore,
With demon learning that could gladly feed
Thy love of rule which thirsted still for more.

XXXVI.

And here was, then, thy palace! here thy word
Call'd up the spirits from their viewless cells,
While Deva's banks with awe-struck wonder heard
The midnight echo to thy secret spells!
And from yon cliff, with anxious, straining eye,
Glanced thy stern gaze afar o'er hill and dale,
Spanning each deep defile and mountain high,
With watchful frown and visage dark and pale.

XXXVII.

In Corwen's lone and heather-tinted vale
Hear the Welsh harp its plaintive wailings breathe,
In full, confiding softness to the gale,
Which trembles near its strings as if to wreathe
The mournful chords with a caressing love,
While, one by one, the harmonies around
Their cadence roll, and to the heights above
Their dreamy melodies and songs resound.

XXXVIII.

None richer than thine own, thou swelling strain, (6)
Whose every note hath influence o'er the heart,
Beauteous as Cader Idris, whence was ta'en
Thy lofty name! how precious were the art
To draw such tones from every slumbering wire,
As he, the Bardd Alaw! when first thy lay
Stole from his touch, and, fill'd with Cambrian fire,
Burst forth, rejoicing to the golden day!

XXXIX.

Silently falls the shroud of evening now,
Dimmer and dimmer fades the soft twilight,
Sadder the river pours its whispers low,
Day's last beam fleets away—and all is night!
Night! yet not darkness! no! for high afar
The pallid moon, in majesty serene,
Floats through the heavens, with many a circling star
Set like a diadem,—herself the queen!

XL.

Unbounded realms of beauty round her shed
Their cloudless lustre, yet she glides alone,
Unrivall'd by the beaming train she led
Of old, to gem the night ! bright then she shone,
And silvers now the ripples of the Dee,
Which joyous spreads its dimpled surface wide
Over the verdant bank, kissing the flow'ry lea,
Or pebbly shoal, in glad, fantastic pride !

XLI.

It is a fount of pleasure, clear and deep,
Gliding through many a varied, lovely spot,
Sometimes where drooping woods around it sweep,
And veil its current, till almost forgot
By careless wanderer ; then once more it flings
Itself 'mid open plains or meadows gay :
Methinks 'tis like a spirit, for it brings
Life and sweet minstrelsy where'er it stray.

XLII.

Is it not hallowed ? (7) Yes ! the humble brow
Of many a votary bent before its shrine
In ages past, with adoration low,
Quaffing the waters pure they deem'd divine.
The stalwart warriors, in stern bands, were seen
To kneel beside it in heart-prompted praise,
Ere battle raged along its margin green,
And foe met foeman's eye with haughty gaze.

XLIII.

Still, Dee ! thy stream is sacred, for its name
Is blended with the treasures of the past,
Recalling mighty 'deeds and brilliant fame,
Which shall, like thee, for ever stainless last.
For thou hast sprung amid these silent hills
At heavenly mandate, that the earth might gain
Freshness and plenty from thy blessed rills,
And like thy source, thou dost *divine* remain !

XLIV.

Breathe softly ! let no harsh or jarring sound
Break on the dewy stillness of the air ;
For Nature's harmony now steals around,
Soothing each sense with melody so rare,
'T is like the echo of ideal strains,
(Caught from the lyre of Orpheus when he swept
Its chords with Love's own skill!) that still retains
The lingering pathos at which rocks have wept.

XLV.

Edeyrnion ! dreamiest of my varied themes !
How in huge masses of intensest shade
Rise thy hoar cliffs ! by Cynthia's purest beams,
With lustrous beauty the ravine array'd.
How peaceful and how holy seems the hour
To rest upon the hush'd and slumbering earth,
A moment form'd to pass in such a bower
As this, far from th' intruding noise of mirth !

XLVI.

A moment but for silent, pensive thought,
Like those which oft across the fancy sweep,
As if from other worlds the night had caught
A hallow'd influence for the dawn of sleep !
So consecrated for poetic joys unbroken,
Save by the murmur of some " antique song ;"
Or whispering words like liquid music spoken,
Faint links of memory, sinking along !

CANTO II.

I.

BALA! how dim appears the wish'd-for day
That bids us blithely hail thy pleasant hills;
How thick the shadows thy mild bosom sway,
While feathery haze the far horizon fills;
Shrouding with soft obscurity the vale,
As if the vision had been all too fair,
While sullen murmurs break along the dale,
And breezy coolness stirs the languid air!

II.

O lonely, lonely lake ! I hear thy waves
Dashing upon the beach with hollow roar,
While the rough bases that thy billow laves
Come back to me like scenes I view'd before !
Speaking most eloquently to my heart,
That hush'd with awe humbles before thee now,
Owning that all those truths which oft-times dart
Conviction to the soul, from Nature flow !

III.

Far, — far I gaze upon thy heaving tide,
Which ever rolls with melancholy sound,
As if some unquiet pulse of grief or pride
Urged the swollen waters o'er their rocky bound.
The grey and lowering clouds that flit on high,
Weigh'd down with the same sadness, seem to weep ;
A thousand feelings rous'd, I know not why,
Across my troubled mind all chilling creep.

IV.

But onward — onward ! on our mountain way,
Through barren pass and desolated moor,
Let not such musings our slow steps delay,
But leave behind the valley and the shore.
Farther and farther on the wild we wend,
Till not a form or sound attracts us now,
Save cloud-capt rocks which misty grandeur lend
To solitude and all its echoes low !

V.

Inspirer of the poet's waking dreams,
And nurse of Superstition's thrilling fears,
That read dread warnings in the moonlight beams,
And consecrate the visionary seers.
Queen of these silent moors and darksome vales,
With elfins gay and fairy's mirthful ring,
What fancy hath not fed, beloved Wales!
Upon the legends that around thee cling ?

VI.

Thou hast thy magic lays, thy wildering glee,
Thy forms that flit along the wan twilight,
Thy voices and thy wind-borne melody,
And spells that work within the mystic night !
What if stern reason fiction's smiles reprove,
And bid credulity no more believe ;
Who from delusion's plains of joy would rove,
Or sad reality's dim truths receive ?

VII.

Oh ! what were life without the short-lived bloom,
Which scatters radiance o'er man's lorn abode ?
And sheds a lustre through the chilling gloom,
Like that which now illumines our weary road,
As far o'er turf-clad paths the purple heather
And spreading gorse with golden blossoms crown'd,
Twining and mingling joyously together,
Profusely mantle the else barren ground.

VIII.

And casting on the earth a rainbow shade,
Softening and changing with cameleon hue,
Bright'ning o'er every cliff and every glade,
With sportive loveliness our glances woo.
Yet broken here and there by silver streams,
Forming anon pools that like diamonds glow,
Fringed by the graceful cotton-plant that seems
To veil the dark morass with flakes of snow.

IX.

But other charms have burst upon my gaze,
The curtain of the mist is rent aside,
The wakening sun looks from his couch of haze;
As when Earth first beheld his new-born pride.
Oh, Nature! here amid thy grandest scenes,
To thee thy votary lifts her wondering eyes,
From the deep precipice o'er which she leans,
To the immeasurable distance of the skies!

X.

Mountains on mountains, thick and hugely piled,
Bursting confusedly on the wanderer's view,
With their high chasms and their ravines wild,
And the wide billows of the ocean blue!
Bounding that fearful and majestic vale,
As with a girdle,—yes, a spanless zone!
Bending our souls with sinking awe to hail
And bow before Creation's glorious throne!

XI.

And here are cataracts thundering to the main,
Foaming and boiling o'er the dizzy height,
That leap o'er all, and scornfully disdain
The barriers they have loosen'd in their might:
Lashing the aged rocks in their descent,
Stunning with their loud fall the gleesome air,
The voice of rushing waters strangely blent
With eagles screaming from their unseen lair!

XII.

Earth ! earth ! with all thy splendour everlasting,
Raising our spirits to the far-off heaven,
And from our nothingness the mantle casting,
Till we can only pray to be forgiven,
For the vain murmurings of our stubborn life
Bound in the fetters of a paltry dross,
And led away by every whirlwind's strife,
Buying false joys by an eternal loss !

XIII.

Ffestiniog ! yes ! one fleeting hour like this,
Of gazing on thy matchless realms of might,
Is worth a century of meaner bliss,
Far from thy beauty's spirit-kindled light,
Whose rays through many a care-distracting day,
Returning freshly to the anguish'd mind,
Will bid us fling such worldly thoughts away,
And love the lessons in thy depth enshrined !

XIV.

The travellers pause on Aberglasslyn's steep,
While evening dews weigh down the misty air;
They muse upon the arch 'neath which there sweep
The torrents that have left their dizzy lair
High on the precipice's rugged brow,
And like a mountain of the snow-white foam,
Rush onward to the darker depths below,
Which yawn to woo them to their sullen home!

XV.

Far—far above, enshrouded in the sky,
The pathless cliffs, with melancholy frown,
Louring o'er all, echo th' ascending cry
Of the mad waters as they thunder down;
And grimly seem as if at once bereft
Of every tie to bind them back to earth,
Save one lone tree, that from a dreary cleft
Hangs drooping with a sort of pensive mirth,

XVI.

Waving its fresh, green foliage to the wind,
The sole, bright vision on that scowling rock :
Like as when in the heart some impulse kind
Still lingers meekly, proof 'gainst every shock ;
And casts such sweetness on the soil around,
Clinging more fondly when the tempest rages,
And ever with its weeping tendrils found
In deathless constancy through mental ages.

XVII.

'T was here, in years that long have pass'd away
To pale oblivion (8) with their treasured woe,
The minstrel loved in visions dark to stray,
With steeps above and raging streams below,
That gave an answer to the thoughts that urged
His brain almost to frenzy, and which fired
His bardic hand, while all emotion merged
Into the gulf of that which most inspired,

XVIII.

His glowing strains!—no hope of wide renown
His lays impell'd,—his high, heroic aim
To tear dishonour from his country's crown,
And rouse from slavery every heart of flame,
Which 'mid the victor's shackles panted still
With thirst for vengeance! Some he sought to wake
From dull despair which did their bosoms chill,
And bade their patriot swords their bondage break!

XIX.

Then hence his summons wide and distant rung,
Till at the sound the startled stranger quail'd;
And when the accents of his native tongue
The Cambrian heard, wildly its tones he hail'd;
They spoke to him of freedom and of life
In words of burning memory, which did peal
As from his birthplace, till the mental strife
Grew all too keen, and arm'd his flashing steel!

XX.

And now the glad reward of trustful days,
 (Spent in bright picturings of this distant scene,
And the high breathings of historic lays
 That hallow'd this fair valley's charms serene,)
Beams on my soothed and happy view at last,
 And richer than were e'er my dearest dreams,
Smiles with the fond traditions of the past,
 And closely wreathed with noble memory seems!

XXI.

Beddgelert! thou most loved and shelter'd gem,
 Buried among these sharp, o'erhanging rocks,
From whose rough bases rise the aged stem
 Of many a stunted oak, that strangely mocks
The laughing verdure of the plain below,
 Deck'd with the freshness of undying springs,
O'er thee, calm Evening, with her footsteps slow,
 Her robe of purple melancholy flings.

XXII.

Snowdonia towers above us with its throng
Of gloomy clouds and loudly howling gales,
Which sweep their savage bands the clefts along,
And screen each summit from the peaceful vales ;
Save on some favour'd days when sunny ray
Breaks through the robe of mist, and tears aside
Its coiling shadows, wafting them away,
While loom the mountains in their native pride.

XXIII.

This is the realm which wild Romance hath made
Her hallow'd region, her most mystic shrine ;
Where every lofty peak and dreary shade
Thrill through the heart with promptings half divine ;
And summon to the mind of yielding man
A thousand dim beliefs and wondrous dreams ;
While every breath and murmur serves to fan
The wavering terrors with which Fancy teems.

XXIV.

Each glad creation of the bards of eld
Has woven here its most unfading wiles ;—
And still with each deceit their eyes beheld
In inspiration, this their haunt beguiles
The loitering traveller, and around him spreads
A maze of loveliness, from which his feet
Refuse to pass ; Delusion o'er him sheds
Her brilliant lures, and whispers legends sweet,

XXV.

Which round our fair Snowdonia love to shower
Their balmy memories ; fain would all receive
As truth her prattlings of each moss-clad tower
And grassy mound, and what she sings, believe.
Oh ! surely if the charms of outward earth
Have influence on the mind, what wildering lore
Must nurture childhood here, where, from its birth,
Majestic Nature's bounties round it pour !

XXVI.

Surely the soul must draw from yonder height
Some portion of its grandeur, which may swell
The trembling pulse with intellectual might,
And cause more noble feelings there to dwell.
Snowdon! thou art that spirit's brightest home,
Which to Imagination doth instil
Its worthiest visions! Oh! how wildly foam
The springs of fancy on thy sacred hill!

XXVII.

I know a token of thy glorious power,
Which years ago did sink into my heart,
And there hath slumber'd, till this silent hour
Did to the scene such eloquence impart:
Then rose it to my memory, fresh and clear,
As now but recent heard; these spots recall
Its wondrous meanings, which anew appear
To twine around me a redoubled thrall.

THE DREAMER OF SNOWDON. (9)

The moon is up on Snowdon's cloud-capt height,—
The stars are on the mantle dark of Night
Hanging like jewels:—all the earth is stil
And motionless;—even that lofty hill
Has lost some measure of its terrors now!
The very torrents (that from its stern brow
Swept with a rushing murmur fierce and deep,)
Are silent; they have wept themselves to sleep,
As infants; and the snow of countless ages
Looks as if Peace were written in its pages.
The breath of June is on the sultry air,
Like a sweet song whisp'ring of visions fair
And pleasant regions, where each fresh, green bough
Within hath unseen minstrels, who do grow
A part and portion of its verdant life,
Which is with soothing concert ever rife.
But what is this to Snowdon, with its crest
Of boundless grandeur shrouded into rest;

Or, silver'd by the radiance of the moon,
The soft, bright planet of that lulling June !
Midsummer's night—the glory of the year —
Broods o'er the earth, shedding a lustre clear
On every summit, every mountain-pass,
And rock-bound lake, that, like the mocking glass,
Gives back her image from its crystal waves,
As if another sky lurk'd in its fairy caves!
Oh! marvel not that Fancy should have wove
Her own lone dreamings with the nights above,
And fabled that unearthly spells have power
Most in Midsummer's hush'd and lovely hour;
And that on that sweet eve have oft been seen
The elfin bands to trip upon the green
In tiny circles, leaving here and there
The trace of footsteps on the verdure fair.
Then, too, the wondering peasants oft-times hear
Low strains of music stealing on the ear,
Half imperceptibly from distant dells,
Like the soft chiming of some far-off bells.
Such is this night! breathing of worlds unknown,
Yet as if melancholy with the tone

Mingled, and on old Snowdon's stern domain
Had fix'd the empire of her mournful reign,
To watch more fondly o'er a slumbering child
That hath sunk down upon that mountain wild,
And sleeps unconsciously, his careless flocks
Roaming and pasturing 'neath the frowning rocks,
Where'er a tuft of fresh, inviting grass
Woos them along the slippery side to pass,—
Cropping the short, crisp blades that lurk between
The greyish cliffs that intersperse the scene.
He heeds them not, for on his youthful brow
So lovingly and soft the moonbeams glow :
He cannot but all calmly, gently sleep,
While o'er his flushing cheek the night-winds sweep,
And dreams of joy weigh on his childish heart ;—
Who could have wish'd such happy friends to part ?
There is a smile upon that quiet face,
And on that lip, curved by the lingering trace,
That seems to whisper of some hidden power,
Soothing his spirit in this tranquil hour ;
And bringing back the infant hopes of yore
That will return to bless him now no more.

For, with his fancies glad, a sound is clinging,—
A cherish'd voice, remember'd music singing ;
Yet with a sadness in the changing tone,
As if from some fair star that dwelt alone
The faint, low melody has sweetly come,
To bear him tidings of its happy home.
And mild, dark eyes are mingling with his dream,
Like scatter'd radiance from the pure moonbeam ;
Looking so kindly on the gazing child,
Though with their light unearthly glances wild
Blending, while some fond hand would gently press
His silken curls with tender, slow caress.
Whose hand was that ? whose were those large clear eyes ?
And who breathed forth those long-drawn, melting sighs ?
Whose memory was it that so sadly crept
O'er his young mind, till e'en in sleep he wept ?
His mother's !—for she was to him indeed
A vision ; like the crush'd and wounded reed,
Her heart had wither'd, every day had stole
Some lustre from her brow, joy from her soul ;
What did she with the world of scorn and pride ?
Droop'd like a fading flow'ret,—and so died !

But not before within the infant's breast
Her holy memory had been deep imprest ;
And now in slumber's moments rose her voice,
To bid the dreamer's guileless mind rejoice.
Half audibly her faltering accents fell
Upon the ear that loved those sounds so well ;
A shade has pass'd across his earnest brow,
Dimming the lustre of its spotless snow :
As when athwart the blue, refulgent sky,
The sudden mists in circling eddies fly ;
The louring heaven weeps down the sultry rain ;
The mists disperse, and all is bright again.
E'en so, o'er dimpled cheek the slow tear steals,
Giving a token of the grief he feels ;
The shade is gone, a silvery ray is shed
Upon the sleeper's gently resting head.
Anon, a thousand changing forms flit by,
Swift as the eagle skims the beaming sky ;
And all is alter'd, every soothing thought
A new emotion has inspiring caught.
There come strange mutterings on the wailing breeze,
Like the storm raging amid lofty trees.

The heavens seem flush'd with an unearthly fire,
The portent of some wonder wild and dire ;
The very rocks shake with an inward heave,
Spirits are roaming through the mystic eve !
And he, the boy, lies softly sleeping still
Amid the glories of that mighty hill.
A form has swept above him, and with wings
Outstretch'd, a shadow wide and deepening flings ;
Honey from those dark pinions dropping fell,
Delicious, as just loosen'd from the cell,
Upon the slumberer's fresh and rosy lip,
Like the ambrosia that the gods would sip.
Again—again ! the vision now has spoke,
And with its thrilling voice the echoes woke,
While back from every desolate defile
The sound has come, and every valley's smile
Hath brighten'd, as its viewless depths return
The haughty fire that in those accents burn !
“ I am the soul of Cambria ! ” thus it cried,
“ The rocks—the skies are emblems of my pride ;
My voice is in the torrent's ceaseless roar,
My fame in the undying lays of yore ;

My memory hallow'd by my heroes' death,
My praises in my minstrel's latest breath!
Snowdon itself will sooner pass away
Than will my empire's majesty decay.
Boy! thou hast ventured in its precincts high,
The pathless regions far above thee lie;
And from my star-built throne have I swept down,
To bind thy forehead with my deathless crown!
Thou shalt be known in poesy and story,
And distant years will waken to thy glory;
Kings will bow down before thee, and thy song
Will kindle nations as it peals along.
Child of the mountain! rise! but from thy heart
The spell of Awen (10) never will depart;
Thou shalt have power,—oh! thou above thy kind,—
To hear the spirits on the moaning wind,
To lift the veil that shrouds the future's page,
And with the elements fierce war to wage;
For thou hast slumber'd here, with mind where stain
Hath linger'd not, and all thy thoughts remain
Pure as the snow where never foot hath trod,
Unsullied as when given from thy God!"

The morning broke on Snowdon's lofty brow,
The torrents rush'd with sullen sound below ;
The mountains in their might stood proud and lone,
The dream was fled, the slumberer was gone !

CANTO III.

I.

HARK ! hark ! the morn has roused the eager hounds,

In hot pursuing of the crafty prey ; (11)

O'er peak—o'er heath—the panting hunter bounds,

And with loud cry salutes the rosy day !

The hills are echoing to the well-known notes,

As gaily as Llewellyn's train of yore

Rent the high cliffs with the dogs' baying throats

Foaming and tearing o'er the barren moor.

II.

Then backward turning on the doubling trace,
With cautious scent, and wide-distended eye,
Scouring along the rugged mountain's base,
Again—again—renew the deafening cry!
Higher they dash, and higher along the height,
Toiling amid the crags with restless leap,
Till in the shadow of the summit's might
We lose them in some chasm dark and steep.

III.

E'en so, perchance, Llewellyn's thrilling horn
Rang through the pass at break of earliest day;
Startling the drowsy slumbers of the morn,
While on the chase he took his eager way:—
E'en so, he often wistful gazed behind,
To see his Gelert rush along the heath,
To hear his mellow bay upon the wind.
Alas! that they should only meet in Death!

IV.

For in the mind are many tender strings
That to mute objects of affection bind
Our love ;—some cherish'd friend that ever clings
Unchanged, though *all* on earth should shrink behind !
So felt Llewellyn, when the speaking eyes
Of his dumb favourite meekly gazed on his ;
Whose gentle touch would seek to soothe his sighs,
Or whine of joy give answer to his bliss.

V.

While couch'd his Gelert at the monarch's feet,
When festive mirth and jest went round the hall ;
Or when glad bound his wish'd return would greet,
Or cry of rapture for attention call :
Ah ! then, when oft he pass'd his fondling hand
O'er the sleek head, and the slight ears caress'd,
Little he thought that 'mid the courtly band
His steel alone should pierce that faithful breast !

VI.

And who may tell the prince's anguish'd pangs,
When, home returning, Gelert met his view,
Triumphant bounding, with blood-dropping fangs,
While earth and rushes flush'd with kindred hue?
The cradle tenantless, the infant fled,
Told to his dread-struck brain a tale of fear;
He dreamt not that, conceal'd, the wolf lay dead,
And his fair child in safety slumber'd near!

VII.

Beddgelert! must I bid thee now farewell?
Thou, where the heather blooms so rich and deep,
And the stream dances through the joyous dell,
Where evening dewes so clear and silent sleep!
Farewell! but still my heart will rest with thee
Whene'er the breeze is fresh, the sunshine bright,
And the green leaves are gleaming far and free,
My memory will be glowing in that light:

VIII.

The music of thy vale will to me come,
When o'er those farther hills I fondly stray,
Blending with the dear sounds of life and home
Thoughts of the scenes that smile so far away!
Then will I dream my wanderings o'er again,
And the loved incidents of by-gone hours,
When summer mantled every rock and plain,
And we were lingering in thy sylvan bowers.

IX.

Or when by Dinas' fairy lake we pass'd,
While morning rays lit up the tiny waves,
Which with a gentle, liquid ripple, cast
Their silvery waters on the scowling caves;
Upon our toilsome road, then farther wending,
Llyn Gywnnant's murmurs, chiding softly near,
And with the sheep-bells lone and distant blending,
Float on the breeze from depths serene and clear.

X.

Fair picture! deck'd with every richest hue,
And brightest features of our ancient Earth,
Woven to one glad vision, calm and new,
As if first waken'd to its beauteous mirth.
Thou seem'st a fresh creation, here where spread
Around, above dark battlements of rock;
Or like some child that, 'mid these scenes of dread
A truant, lingers still their gloom to mock.

XI.

Not here, fair Muse! we may not loiter now,
This is too high a theme for idle song;
The flushing throbs that beat upon my brow
In honey'd whisperings may not die along.
No! for my heart has leap'd into my eyes,
And with such ecstasy my spirit urges;
As when far flashing to the burning skies,
The ocean madly flings its snowy surges!

XII.

Is there a love more pure, or thought more bright,
Than those which speak of Nature's wide domain;
Deeming naught dearer than her golden light,
Nor Fancy's wanderings fairer than her reign?
Thus on the Gorphwysfa I stopp'd to gaze,
As from a throne, upon those glorious vales,
And on old Snowdon, wrapp'd in shrouding haze,—
The eternal crown of our own storm-girt Wales!

XIII.

Behind, thou fair Llyn Gwynnant! with thy smile
Of quenchless beauty, and thy mellow'd shade
Of deepening purple, softening the defile
With hues of living joy that never fade.
And that clear lake, with its untroubled waves
So calm, scarce ruffled by the passing wind;
And guarded by each lofty rock that braves
For countless years the elements combined.

XIV.

Fit dwelling for one desolate and lone, (12)

And weary of the stormy, hollow world,—

One who, with suitable reward, had grown

The victim of the bolts himself had hurl'd,—

Unhappy, but unpitied Vortigern!

Here 'mid these mountains often did he roam,

With vain regrets and with forebodings stern,

Of slavery and unnumber'd woes to come.

XV.

From the false allies he had lately sued

For help and safety from the Pictish arms;

They, of whose people he had fondly woo'd

The fair Rowena of the guileful charms.

Well might the monarch mourn, who thus had sold

His country's freedom for the Saxon's child,

And stifle in his heart the rage untold,

Scarce breathing forth those passions deep and wild!

XVI.

If aught could calm that struggle, it had been
The lulling whispers of the moaning stream,
The placid stillness of that fairy scene,
The realising of some poet's dream!
Not so; the ghastly vale that starts aside
In thrilling grandeur from that spot of peace,
Through which the foaming rivulets that glide
With their hoarse rush, the thickening gloom increase.

XVII.

The gloom of toppling crags, sharp, straight, and dark,
And lost amid the low'ring misty sky,
As if a breath might scatter them: yet, hark!
What burst like thunder rolls and groans on high? (13)
Yet not a stone is loosened! far more strong
Hath been the tumult which once rent that height
And dash'd confusedly the rocks along,
As if unearthly powers had met in fight!

XVIII.

Or as a doom had fallen on all around,
 Smiting the Cwm-glâs with its iron wrath,
And sweeping vegetation from the ground,
 Till broken barriers mark alone the path.
Thus looks this valley,—as if chill'd by Death!
 Vast and inanimate, a dreary pile,
The very moss seems half-afraid to wreath
 The fallen fragments with its sombre smile!

XIX.

Yet here has life — a humble life been spent,
 Years since, when yet more sad this wondrous glen,
Ere smoothing time had civilising lent
 Its aid, and hither drawn the steps of men!
There is a huge and shapeless mass of stone, (14)
 Hurl'd from the cliff by some convulsion past;
Grim, dark, and mighty, it reclines alone,
 Amid the deep morass where it was cast!

XX.

Within there is a hollow, small and low,
Where solitary 'mid those mountains grey,
To the old cromlech did a female go,
To end her mournful hours, perchance to pray.
How dreary must have been the livelong night,
With the wild storm borne on the sultry air,
And the wind rustling past with savage might,
As if to mock her in her rocky lair !

XXI.

And gathering hollow voices as it flew,
From every cliffy summit, chasm, brake,
And wafting shadowy forms of dismal hue
Upon its wing, on to the distant lake.
Here with a sadden'd step the traveller strays,
While wondering peasants point to Hetty's isle,
Memorial of long months and lonely days,
With scarce a friendly voice or kindly smile.

XXII.

Yet not all cheerless! no;—for she could love
The hand of Heaven that guarded her so well,
And hear the voice that whisper'd from above,
Shedding a lustre o'er the gloomy dell:
Happier, perhaps, than if in lordly bowers
Her life was spent with every folly vain,
Striving to deck with joy the lagging hours,
Only to feel their weight return again!

XXIII.

As thus I said, I turn'd, and leaning near,
Beheld an aged man, whose long white hair
Fell o'er his brow; like Autumn ere 'tis sere
He truly look'd,—though old, unchill'd by care.
He seem'd no peasant, though his garb was plain;
An oaken staff his frame assistant propp'd:
As slowly he advanced, nor yet in vain,
I curious gazed; close to my side he stopp'd.

XXIV.

His ear had caught my words, and in reply
He pointed to the dark recess, and said:—
“ A century or more hath fled by
Since Hetty of this rock a dwelling made.
It was not always thus with her; of old
A thousand times I heard my father tell
Her simple history;—when, a stripling bold,
He knew and loved the gentle creature well!”

XXV.

The story seem'd to tremble on his tongue;
Nor did I fail to urge that he would pour
Unto my listening mind the tale that clung
So closely on his memory from of yore!
Then, all compliant to my earnest will,
He sat him down upon a rugged stone;
And wove his legend with a rustic skill,
Which found an echo 'mid those mountains lone!

THE LEGEND OF THE CROMLECH.

Once, o'er the spring-enamell'd mead,
No lighter foot the dance could lead,—
No form more swiftly mid the throng
Could thread the graceful maze along!
Where'er the sweetest voice was heard,
Carolling like a summer bird;
Where'er 'mid autumn-tinted bowers,
A cheek glow'd brighter than the flowers,
That voice—that cheek gave warning true
That there young Hetty, fawnlike, flew!
Ne'er on her brow a vestige play'd
Of grief or transitory shade;
To her the very name of care
Seem'd idle mockery; all so fair
The lovely world that round her spread,
She deem'd no winter e'er could shed
A dimness o'er it, or impart
A chill and discord to her heart!

Thus, when the aged of sorrow told,
She smiled to hear their counsels cold;
Nor heeded when, with warning sigh,
They bade her think that youth pass'd by
As fleeting as a morning dream!
She laugh'd with such a guileless gleam
Of triumph in her eyes, that all
Forgot their wisdom in her thrall!

And then she wedded: one though young,
More thoughtful than herself. There hung
No pomp or wealth around their home,
It rose beneath the heaven's blue dome,—
A lowly hut, shelter'd by hills
That chafed with many swelling rills!
But Hetty's face was still as bright,
Her words as gay, her heart as light;
And ever grew her thoughts more glad,
And fearless of reverses sad!
Some years pass'd by, and then there fell
Dark changes on the peaceful dell;
No longer when the sunset flush'd
The mountains hoar, and evening blush'd,

The cheerful hearth, more freshly stored
With turf, its radiance wider pour'd :
No more stole Hetty forth to view
The distant scene and gathering dew,
To watch with glance of anxious love
The paths that wound the hills above ;
Straining her all-expectant gaze,
While round her sank the twilight's haze,
To hail him who from moorlands grey
Was wont to take his homeward way.
Ah! ne'er again his foot would tread
Those cherish'd haunts ; his spirit fled,
Rejoiced on high in endless rest,
No more by earthly cares oppress'd !
And she—her rounded cheek had grown
A tint less rich, and grief had thrown
A softness on her deep dark eyes,
More like the colouring of the skies.
No longer from her lip there rung
Such gleeful strains, for now she sung
Only in whispers sweet and low,
Till sleep had kiss'd her infant's brow.

I have not told you of her child,
Which most her lonely hours beguiled,
Nor how the widow's feelings twined
Their all around him, and did bind
A thousand aspirations there,
Picturing a future calm and fair;
And hanging many fond, fond dreams
Upon one stay;—as flattering gleams
The distant sail on ocean blue,
A glad, perhaps, deceptive view
To one, who, shipwreck'd on an isle
Of barren solitude, sees smile
For him no ties of kindred love,
Or friendly aid, save from above!
With eagerness like that which rends
His very life, as there he bends,
And gazes on the shadowy speck,
Sole hope that hath survived his wreck,
Did Hetty watch her noble boy;
And mark with strangely bounding joy
Each passing day, and month, and year,
Dispel each doubt, soothe every fear,

For blithe and swift as mountain gales,
He frolick'd through his native vales,
While every summer left a trace
Of rosier health upon his face.
Often with venturous foot he stray'd
Along the rocks, and gleeful made
Their echoes ring with merry shout ;
And free, wild song so sweet chimed out,
You would have thought a fairy's voice
Did from her unseen home rejoice ;
Warm, frank, and fond, his infant heart
Imbibed no chill, conceal'd no art :
But, like a fount of crystal tide,
Which deep and pure beneath doth glide,
Although it sparkle bright above,
His spirit breathed of guileless love
To all around, but to her most,
Whose life he was, and noblest boast !

Poor and alone, with honest pride,
Her nimble distaff Hetty plied ;
And when across the dreary moor
The produce of her toil she bore

To neighbouring towns, sometimes her son
By her loved side would sportive run,
Light'ning her of some trifling load,
And prattling on the lonely road.
But now, when winter's sullen blast
Along the snow-clad valleys pass'd,
No more she yielded when he press'd
On her glad ear the bold request.
“ Look forth! my child, how dim the sky!
See! mists are circling far on high;
Scarcely my strength will thither bear,
Myself, so rough the whirlwinds tear;
But if I had thy steps to lead,
The way were cumbersome, indeed.
Here, then, in calm content remain:—
When summer days return again,
We will once more together go,
And trace the upward paths, or low
'Mid valleys wander, plucking flowers,
Which Heaven in gracious bounty showers.
Rest then! nor venture forth to stray,
By stream or precipice to play,—

Early I shall return to see
Thy welcoming eyes beam out with glee!"

Now o'er the earth Night drives apace
His dusky steeds, till scarce a trace
Of lingering day the twilight breaks;
While swiftly ravening tempest wakes,
And hovering on the horizon dim,
Summons his clouds in masses grim;
While deathlike silence reigns around,
Till falling on the thirsty ground
Large flakes of snow are slowly seen,
At first, so thin and far between,
That more they seem like eagle down,
From rapid wing, in passing, blown.

Now cowers the boy beside the fire,
And piles its turf-fed embers higher,
While oft within each burning heap,
His fancy sees strange figures creep,
Odd, grinning faces, herds and cots,
Sparkling along the reddest spots,

Until his eyes, so laughing bent,
Ache with the toil, and mirth is spent!
Then ponders he on mountain nooks,
Then from the tiny casement looks,
And wonders when his mother's feet
His anxious, listening ear will greet.
Darker and darker grows the dale,
Partly because the snow-clouds veil
The heavens, but still no Hetty's form
Her son beholds: he marks the storm
Mantling the earth, and sweeping loud,
Where barren peaks all densely crowd.
A thousand fears his mind distress,—
A thousand plans his thoughts oppress;
He gazes from the humble door,
And thinks upon the dismal moor
O'er which her painful steps must pass,
Shunning deep cleft or damp morass.
Large tears his wistful eyes bedew,
Which seek to pierce the mist-clouds through;
Would that he were a man, to guide
Her faltering way with guardian pride,

And shelter with his sturdy arm
Her tender frame from blast or harm !
Fired by these thoughts, his peaceful home
He musing leaves, alone to roam.
At first, he only means to tread
The road which o'er the mountains led,
As he remembers, when before
He did in summer rocks explore
“ For thence,” he mutters, “ I can see
If near at hand my mother be !”
So speeds he up the dreary path,
While howling storms pour forth their wrath !

Deserted gleams the rustic cot,
That seems by human foot forgot ;
The fire in sinking, glowing light
Derides the dimness of the night ;
No cherub face beside it smiles,
No babbling voice the hour beguiles,
No busy hand prepares the meal,
Or winds the flax on careful reel.
Forth from each cranny, starting gay,
The chirping mice delighted play,

And scour along the echoing ground,
With black-eyed joy and sportive bound.

Now on its hinges turns the door,
The timid train forsake the floor,
And Hetty's voice, in fondling tone,
Vibrates along the chamber lone.
“My own dear child!” she eager cries,
Then starts and trembles with surprise,
With frantic haste each spot surveys,—
In vain, for nothing meets her gaze;
With voice of agony she screams
His cherish'd name, but answering streams
A burst of wailing from the heights,
O'er which the whirlwinds wing their flights;
His voice is mute!—Till now restrain'd,
The tempest's rage is swift unchain'd;
And thundering from the frowning sky,
The snow doth pour, and drifting fly
In blinding wreath; while hill and dell
Seem groaning with some demon spell!

Now learn why thence to this sad den
Poor Hetty fled ;—the haunts of men
Bore not a charm for one whose grief,
Deep and eternal, scorn'd relief,
She could not bear to linger still
Where once such joy her heart did fill ;
Yet could she not the scenes forsake
Where he had died ; nor sternly break
Old fancies from her anguish'd brain,
When they, intruding, turn'd again.
Hither she came, for in this wild,
On dismal mount, was found her child ;
The heavy snow above him lay,
As it had done for many a day ;
And yet his brow was still and sweet,
As if his death were calm to meet ;
And pillow'd on his arm his head,
As gentle sleep were o'er him shed.
Alas ! when from her lonely cell
She gazed along the sombre dell ;
His form would glide before her view,
Not blooming, but with pallid hue :

Then would she turn to weep and pray
With anguish'd memory: smiling day
Had lost all gladness to her eye,
And the breeze seem'd one endless sigh;
Yet could she not lie down and die,
For Heaven had laid upon her brow
This heavy weight; till like the snow
Her heart was chasten'd, and she raised
In humbleness her voice, and praised
The hand that struck her,—then from life
She vanish'd.

Whene'er the shepherd here at eve
Doth wander, peasants still believe,
That oft upon yon gloomy height
Shrill cries disturb the mournful night.
The wailings of the noble child,
Lost in the mazes of the wild;
Which, sounding to his awe-struck ear,
Chill every pulse with dread and fear.
But I, by no such thoughts oppress'd,
Shun not this valley's dismal breast;
For well I know in yon blue dome
Mother and child have gain'd their home!

XXVI.

Llanberis! I may never see thee more,
Or gaze upon thy summits wrapp'd in cloud,
But thoughts of awe I never felt before
Will still recall to me thy mountains proud;
And that my wondering eyes have fondly drank
Long draughts of joy from the eternal well,—
The well of earthly beauty;—they have sank
Deep to my heart an all-entrancing spell!

XXVII.

For I have loved them, yes! in scenes like this,
And in the softer charms of other vales,
Glowing with radiance, as if steep'd in bliss,—
Loved them in all; but most in thee, O, Wales!
For thou it was that first to me didst give
A shadowing of fair Nature's stores untold
Of loveliness, and taught'st me that to live
Was but to live in her, as once of old;

XXVIII.

When shepherds watch'd their feeding flocks by night
In Chaldea's land, and gazing up on high
Drew learning from the stars' enshrinèd light,
And read bright science in the azure sky :
Then every stone had meaning, every flower
And leaf they trod on pour'd its wealth unknown ;
Fresh secrets where unveil'd with every hour ;
They knelt below, but worshipp'd Heaven's own !

XXIX.

Oh, mortals ! it is Thought alone that raised
Our minds from dust, — then leave her glories *free* !
Can we volcanoes quench that long have blazed,
Lull the swift whirlwind, curb the mighty sea ?
Look up to Heaven ! that far, majestic dome,
Whether its vault be dimm'd by vapoury cloud,
Or azure smiles, just tipp'd with snowy foam,
Mantle its realm ; — can thine eye pierce that shroud,

XXX.

Which hides from mortal gaze transcendant light?

Can it above that all-unfathom'd veil

Survey man's fate as traced in letters bright?

And can thy lips breathe forth the mystic tale?

Oh! Thought is like that whirlwind sweeping by

Uncaged, untamed,—ne'er to return again;

And like that ocean's billows dashing high,

And like that flame's ungovernable reign!

XXXI.

'Tis as that vast expanse of ether spread

Above the world, untrodden and unknown,

Save by the spanless orbs whose path is sped.

Far, far on high, some girdled, some alone!

Thought is unchain'd! her ever-rapid wing

Sweeps, like the lightning, o'er the mighty earth,

Till coiling to her nest, her fancies bring

Rich treasures of a momentary birth!

XXXI.

Then broods she o'er the past, with all its crowd
Of spectral forms and long-remember'd hours ;
While voices from the tomb, re-echoing loud,
Mutter dark lore : and mournful memory showers
Tears o'er the visionary, night-robed page,
Freshening the tides of sorrow in the heart ;
Or, calling scenes of some inspired age,
A new existence o'er her seems to dart :

XXXIII.

For then she wanders 'mid the things of yore,
While beats each pulse with feelings all her own,
Or on the future meditates the more,
Looking on all from her immortal throne !
Time bears away upon its waveless tide
The monuments of human worth and fame,
Annihilating every trace of pride,
Engulfing nations and each blazon'd name !

XXXIV.

The frame of man may moulder to decay,
The sky itself be robb'd of heavenly light,
The earth, the ocean may be swept away,
But Thought shall live through every storm and blight!
For 't is a ray from that Eternal Power
Which survey'd chaos ere the world began :
And now o'er all its influence doth tower,
Loftiest of blessings God vouchsafed to man!

XXXV.

Then bind her not, when panting forth to roam
Through realms unseen, soaring on pinions proud,
Seeking again her own primeval throne,
Or, 'neath the wave, or on the circling cloud.
And force her not to wander when, oppress'd
With lengthen'd flight, she silently sinks down,
And slumbers for a moment in the breast,
Veiling the glories of her radiant crown!

CANTO IV.

I.

FAR have I wander'd o'er this land of song,
 'Mid craggy hills and plains bedeck'd with heath;
Have loiter'd sometimes as I pass'd along,
 And sought the secrets that were twined beneath.
Yet not like those, the minstrels of times fled,
 Who idled blithely on their lengthen'd way,
And wheresoe'er they stray'd enchantment shed,
 With the sweet blending of their harp and lay.

II.

Then when at eve they stopp'd by cottage door
And ivied porch, the old man smiling praised
The tuneful tones that from their chords would pour,
And childhood's voice a gleeful chorus raised.
Or else in banquet hall, or beauty's bower,
They strain'd their skill and struck their softest measure,
With tales of love or war beguiled the hour,
And soothed the whispering maze of courtly pleasure.

III.

The poet's verse, the minstrel's balmy spell,
Have lost their freshness, fabled worlds grow dim,
While fades Romance with hollow-toned farewell,
Hallowing no more the tower or mountains grim.
Few now the lyres that can essay to wake
Her languid slumbers, from fair Fancy's home
Scarcely faint echoes low and plaintive break,—
'Tis icy Silence reigns within her dome!

IV.

Whence flows the change? Does Wisdom guide us now
More brightly than when mighty Shakspeare sang;
And we believed, that on each knoll's green brow
The elfins danced, and groves unceasing rang
With magic laughter? Are our hearts more warm
Than when we wept to hear of tragic woe?
Or have our fleeting lives a purer charm
Than hover'd o'er them some short years ago?

V.

I rest upon an ancient, rustic bridge,
Sweet Capul Curig! which doth lightly span
Thy lake, while far appears the snowy ridge
Of Cambria's monarch. Breezes slowly fan
The tall trees clustering round the placid glade,
Which, like a timid nursling, fondly sleeps,
As if secure 'neath giant Snowdon's shade,
Nestling and crouching near the jagged steeps!

VI.

And breathed on by the gentlest wind of Heaven,
Stirring so lovingly the limpid waves,
Gladly at morn, and soothingly at even,
Bearing a wailing murmur from the caves,
Which, frowning, fortify the smiling vale,
Like a sad lamentation from the dead,
Or a reproachful voice upon the gale,
From the old forest's glories that have fled. (15)

VII.

Others have been around me ; eyes grew bright
With novelty and friendship ; mirth and jest
Sprung up, accordant to the sultry light
That fill'd each incident with sunny zest.
All had some sprightly word, some graver thought,
Or wondrous history of the scenes that lie
Basking around, as if each, laughing, sought
To weave their imagings o'er earth and sky !

VIII.

I mingled in the converse of the group,
And we were merry ; for the heart ne'er thrills
With blither feelings than when o'er us droop
Green branches, and beyond vast, lofty hills,
Spread generously their beauties to our gaze ;
The mountain air that flushes every cheek
Illumes in turn the spirit ; every haze
Flies swiftly off, till naught but joy doth speak.

IX.

'Twas then I mark'd beside the bridge there roved
Young children, who with rosy, sunburnt face,
Betray'd the glowing haunts they dearest loved ;
While sporting o'er the sward with artless grace,
Oft here and there, along each lovely bank,
They cull'd the fairy offspring of the soil :
Beneath their touch the cowering blossoms sank,
And pranksome mischief led the pleasing toil.

X.

We watch'd them long—it was indeed a scene
Of happy innocence : the buds, half blown,
Wore semblance to their gatherers,—youth serene
Alike in both with equal freshness shown.
Yet one fair idler who behind me leant
Grew sad with musing, and the silence broke ;
First on the infant thron'g her glances bent,
Then pensive sigh'd, and in soft accents spoke :

XI.

“This strikes us all with pleasure ; those who shear
These meadows of their harvest of gay wreaths,
Will only twine them in their hair, or rear
Some palace with them which all fragrance breathes :
Yet they have been the instruments of wrath
In other hands,—yes ! even woman's heart,
Fired with ambition, straying from the path
Of right, hath there instill'd a fearful art.

XII.

“ Who can believe the gifts that Heaven bestows
 Could shelter crime ; that e’er in frenzied hour
Revenge would seek his poison to inclose,
 And give destruction, lurking in a flower?
Such though has been ! The spot which late we view’d,
 Where Vortigern once dwelt, recalls a story
Of his brave son, and is with truths imbued
 Of the invasion which quench’d Britain’s glory !”

XIII.

We gather’d round her, all with anxious look
 Of expectation, for we knew her mind
Was stored with history : then her seat she took ;
 And while we round attentively reclined,
She paused an instant, as if back to bring
 Her wandering fancies, which capricious play’d,
And gazing archly on our listening ring,
 Commenced her legend, thus in words array’d.

VORTIMER. (16)

A LEGEND OF THE SAXON CONQUEST.

Morning was over all! the East grew red
And flamed with light, while o'er the world there spread
Responsive glory. Every wave and tree,
Wood-circled dale, and open-stretching lea,
Sleep-buried city, and unbroken wild,
Felt genial day approach, and grateful smiled!
The hind went forth to toil:—the conqueror rose
To feast his gaze upon his victim's woes;
The conquer'd turn'd them from the joyful beam,
It brought *no* hope, it but dispell'd the dream!
And they who still on Britain's sea-girt strand
Defied the invaders with unshrinking band,
Shudder'd to think that on their native earth
A stranger drew his troops, and raised his hearth!

Yet when they saw the sun his disk uprear,
And with his rays the dark horizon clear
Of every vapoury fog and saddening shade
That o'er the night-ruled heavens had sullen play'd,
They hail'd him as an emblem of that king
Who rallied them, within whose breast did spring
Those noble virtues which inspired their swords,
And flash'd just vengeance on barbaric hordes!

Fair shone each spot, for morn was over all,
And brightly on the monarch's stately hall
It loved the most to sport, for loiter'd there
By a wide portal one of beauty rare;—
Like that which poets dream of, when they sing
Of fancied Edens, and entrancèd cling
To their own visions: like the snow her brow,
And on her cheek a warm and brilliant glow,
As it were steep'd in summer, or were dyed
By deep-cored roses in their budding pride.
Blue were her eyes, like ocean's azure breast,
When 'neath the Orient skies its surges rest;
Yet there was in their glance a fitful gleam,
Even as that ocean, when the lightning stream

Quivers along it in unsteady line;
The very smile which on her lip did shine
(Which should have breathed the accents of the dove!)
Had more of bitterness in it than love.
No daughter of a British realm was she,
But of a tribe who dwelt beyond the sea :
Her loveliness, which Fame still lauds through time,
Spoke of a Saxon birth and northern clime.

“ It will be sweet,” she murmur’d, as she turn’d
Her look on gardens which with lustre burn’d,
“ It will be joy to mark him ere he tread
The dewy borders which for him have spread
Their odorous bloom, although the blushing wreath
May hide the venom’d snake which coils beneath.
I have no throne, and from my head is torn
Its rightful crown; but ere another morn
All may be mine once more, and from my heart
The pangs of slavery and disgrace depart!
I came not from my own ancestral land
To live a subject on a foreign strand,—
I came not here to waste my youthful days,
Where none will bask within their royal blaze,

But each averted brow wears angry cloud
While *I* am nigh! When Vortigern the proud
Pledged me in Hengist's hall, I deem'd my wiles
Had gain'd the empire of these fertile isles,
When Saxon swords were baffled; that my charms
Had conquer'd swifter than my kindred's arms:
And so it shall be! Vortimer, you come!
Fate seems to lure you to your final home;
Now, faithful servant! now unshrinking haste,
By thee the sting with clustering flowers be graced!"

She clasp'd unconsciously her hands, for rose
To recollection all her fancied woes,
And something too of memories more fond,
Which thrall'd her yet within their gentler bond.
For think not that the soul at once can gain,
Without a pang, guilt's last and darkest stain,—
Can plunge at once into the yawning deep,
Nor pause an instant ere the fatal leap,
Still, still intrudes a thought of happy youth,
A fading dream of innocence and truth!
Such with Rowena were: her brow regain'd
Unusual softness, hopes and griefs restrain'd

Till now, in varying chase, across it play'd,
First radiant beam'd, then shed a fleeting shade,
And every feature with fresh sweets array'd !

There stood beside her one whose foot had pass'd
So noiselessly, the walls no echo cast ;
And he had stopp'd to mark her as she leant
Unheeding there : his calm, deep eyes were bent
Inquiringly upon her, and it seem'd
As something of surprise within them gleam'd.
Perhaps he marvell'd that she loved to stray
Where his accustom'd haunts were known to lay ;
Perhaps he sought to pierce the plans conceal'd
Within her heart, or did unwilling yield
Tribute of wonder to her beauty's spell,
And doubt if evil there could seek to dwell !
It may have been the last : he ne'er had seen
Such strange emotion in her graceful mien ;
He ne'er had gazed on her for space so long.
Within him still were nourish'd thoughts too strong
Of deep aversion for the smiles that won
His father's love, and Britain had undone !

Scarcely so much astonish'd at the deed,
Which caused his wretched country thus to bleed,
As now he linger'd, for a feeling came
That he had wrong'd her ; but that very name
Of wrong awoke him from his wildering trance,
As o'er his brain the stunning truths did glance,
Of her who for Rowena had been slighted,
Shorn of her rank, heart-broken and life-blighted,—
Of her who once had been as young and fair,
And still, though bow'd and worn by galling care,
Look'd upwards with a countenance resign'd
And regal port, which breathed unsullied mind.
He could not think upon his anguish'd mother,
And harbour aught of pity for another,
Who in her fate such agony instill'd
As might have madden'd and had all but kill'd !

He pass'd before her, and her sudden start
Betray'd the tremor which did o'er her dart ;
Yet she look'd up, and met his steadfast eye
With brow undaunted, though with stifled sigh:
Gravely he greeted her, and few the words
With which she answer'd, but they struck like swords

Upon his ear ; for in that silver tone
The accent of her hated tongue was thrown,
And spoke too plain her origin ; he turn'd
Quick from her presence, in his semblance burn'd
The emotions of his spirit, which still shrank
With loathing from the sound his senses drank.
Onward he went, and from that princely hall
Enter'd a spot of loveliness where all
Murmur'd of peaceful pleasure, and along
Stretch'd a fair vista of delight and song!
Rowena follow'd him with gaze which grew
Wildly intense, as farther still he drew ;
Awhile she scarcely breathed, but forward bent
With straining anxiousness which almost lent
Her face unearthly meaning ! Harrowing years
Seem'd to roll o'er her in that moment's fears !

Forth stray'd the monarch through the gardens wide,
Where slumber'd Summer in its joyous pride.
And every blade of grass and tiny flower
Seem'd animate with glee that morning hour.
Nor yet alone within that calm retreat
Were stretch'd those beauties which he held most sweet,

For dimly shadow'd, far as human ken
Could wander, hill and valley, wood and glen,
In distance lay, and clothed the nurturing earth
With verdure; and clear streams, that took their birth
From tangled thicket, or sun-glistening height,
Which peer'd above them all in barren might.
Fondly the monarch paused upon a mound,
And ponder'd o'er the scenes that slept around;
While many a yearning thought his bosom swell'd,
To deck with bays the lofty post he held!
For he was young, and strong in hope and trust;
Seldom o'er human heart hath ever gush'd
A nobler tide of patriotic schemes,
Hallowing the future with their golden dreams.
Already pictured to his radiant mind,
Arose chivalric deeds by virtues shrined,
Back to their sterner home the invaders dash'd,
The snowy cliffs by unquell'd surges lash'd!
Each peasant cot by calm contentment bless'd,
Each velvet mead by plenty's smiles caress'd,
And free as air his own unconquer'd land,
Girt by *his* steel and guarded by *his* hand!

Yes! country of the brave! for thee he fought,
From thee each urging impulse swiftly caught,
In *thee* was all his wealth! *Thou* wert the mine
Within whose depths reposed each prize divine
For which he strove;—Religion, Honour, Life,
His people's freedom mingled in the strife!
Yet Care intruded;—never prospect spreads
Invitingly, but Care its canker sheds
To strip it of its verdure, and decay
The loveliest feature that within it lay.
'T was thus with Vortimer! there sudden stole
A sense of sadness o'er his gallant soul,—
All was not won! still danger hedged him round,
Still roved the Saxon in his kingdom's bound,
And many a fiery struggle, quench'd in gore,
Must Britain rend ere Tyranny be o'er!
He, too, was lone! there lived no trusty friend
To share his grief, or bid his mind unbend
In soothing confidence. His chiefs could fight
When *he* was nigh to lead their armèd might.
They gloried in him! he was as a star
Guiding their actions from his throne afar;

Their only prop, the sole uncrumbling rock
Where they might lean, nor fear the warfare's shock!
They loved him! for he was a jewel richly set
With generous virtues, and there fell not yet
A shade upon his lustre that could dim
Its light with shame. Their country breathed in *him!*
But none could aid him; none had spirit great,
Or pure enough, to mingle with his fate.
They could not see the end to which he trod,
Nor guess the spring to which his Genius' rod
Pointed! There dwelt no eagle 'neath his sway
To gaze undazzled on his brilliant ray!

He pass'd his hand across his brow; he felt
Too sternly! When he rose, before him knelt
A youth in menial garb, which likeness bore
To their's who cull'd the garden's varied store.
A dark expression o'er the stranger's face
Most wildly rush'd, and left a painful trace
Upon his pallid countenance! The king
Smiled kindly on him, for he seem'd to cling
Upon his robe: within his grasp he had
Fair flowers together wove in garland glad!

Full, pouting, bright with forms and colours rare,
They quiver'd to the oft-leaf-stirring air ;
Sparkling and dropping with morn's crystal dew,
Matchless in fragrance, bloom, and sunny hue !
Murmuring some words which breathed of love, yet fear,
The suppliant bent, and did so meek appear
To place his graceful offering at his feet,
The monarch's heart rejoiced in meed so sweet,
And graciously he listen'd to the tale
His artful suitor told ; nor did he fail
To bid him wait within for his return,
When further of his history he might learn.

Again he was alone, and gently sank
Upon a shady and turf-mantled bank,
Then pressing to his lip the glowing wreath,
Seem'd from its honey'd cells delight to breathe.
It was a precious omen, as if sent
From Heaven in guerdon, where were richly blent
A thousand promises of high success,
And every charm that could existence bless !
He had had days of toil, when hours lagg'd by ;
Not as the peaceful feel their moments fly,

But weigh'd by leaden misery, and crush'd down
By the dark care that lurk'd around his crown!
He had had nights, uncheer'd, unsought by sleep,
And tortured by the pangs that oftentimes sweep
The couch of state! when he had musing drawn
Such fantasies as made him long for dawn,
While still revolving through his aching brain
What might restore his sceptre's strength again!
All was forgotten now, entranced he lay,
And felt delicious fancies round him play;
The poison through each vein had lulling crept;
He bow'd his princely head and calmly slept,
But waken'd with a cry! No tongue can tell
The anguish that betray'd the passing knell
Which rung for him, one pain reveal'd the truth:—
Death claim'd him in the prime and pride of youth!

His warriors came! heroic to the last,
He strove to fling aside the shades which cast
Their dimness o'er him, and, with faltering tone,
Conjured them by their country and his throne
To strive unceasing, not to quail or fly,
To fight for stainless freedom, or to die!

He almost knew, he said, whose hate had riven
His thread of life, but *that* he had forgiven;
And were his country safe, he could not pray
For happier doom than thus to fade away.
Heaven seem'd to ope before him, yet he turn'd
Still to the theme for which on earth he burn'd:—
“I sink,” he murmur'd, “’neath a trait’rous hand,
Do you avenge me, brave and trusty band!
Not by the baser arts which rage inspires,
But by such courage as a hero fires.
Bear me to where the Saxons, landing, seek
Their usual harbour, ere their rage they wreak
On hapless Britain,—there where heaves the main,
And the wild blasts their utmost fury strain,
Lay me to rest, and high above me spread
A sepulchre in honour of the dead:
That when the foeman’s foot shall touch the shore,
My tomb may greet him, as *I* used before;
That every breeze which doth o’er cliff rejoice
Shall seem the menace of my warning voice;
And as I once struck terror to each heart
Of Saxon race, my memory still may dart

Awe and confusion their wide ranks along,—
For e'en in death is Patriotism strong !”

Rowena, thus, who dyed her hand with crime,
Shall live in history through the realms of time
Detested ! Yet no lay records her fate :
But if remorse and anguish e'er await
The sinner here, surely they closely wove
Their chains around her with a serpent love.
A veil now hangs around her fearful lot,
In guilt unrivall'd,—in all else forgot !

So sweeps the wing of Time, so rolls along
The flood of years in ever-changing throng ;
So fade the hours of life, the joys of youth,
The summer's verdure, and sweet childhood's truth :
Wave after wave the ocean foams away,
And Hope's chameleon tints delusive play !
When to the ground the storm-torn branch low bends,
And time-sear'd foliage from its height descends,
Mantling the sombre earth with wither'd hues,
Where slow Decay his gnawing power imbues ;

Hast thou not mark'd some autumn-shaded leaf,
Which glisten'd freshly through existence brief,
Borne by the gale that dashes reckless past,—
Now circling swiftly, now neglectful cast
On some lone path ; again, by caprice tost,
And wafted high, in rapid motion lost ;
Blown here, blown there, by each returning breath,
Slumbering below, or mix'd in mazy wreath,
Till, whirl'd by onward air, the brawling stream
Receives the wanderer, which awhile doth gleam
In darksome guise, along the rippling wave :
Then hurries to the depth of unseen cave,
With headlong speed, as eddies wake around,
And lash the rock-banks with a dirge-like sound ?
Such—such is man ! the sport of every wind,
And every passion, mingled with his kind
In smiling friendship, while with beauty gay,
And dazzling with Prosperity's bright ray,
High 'mid fair clusters on the waving bough
He views with scorn the meaner herbs below,
And glancing proudly to the dome on high,
Claims in his joy a kindred with the sky !

But let the tempest gather, fortune low'r.
In vain—in vain, in that despairing hour
He calls, remorseful, on the sheltering stem
Which once he clasp'd, (Time's lost and priceless gem!)
Before the blast of Fate he wildly flies,
Sinks from the world, and thus unheeded dies!
Perchance, repentant, in celestial spring
To bloom once more ; o'er other scenes to fling
A purer radiance, where th' unfading trees,
Eolian, echo back a heavenly breeze!

XIV.

Now fir-clad hills salute me on my way,
Dense forests mantling to their loftiest crest,
And valleys lie between, in rich array,
Wooing the noon-tide on their slopes to rest;
Wildness and cultivation here have thrown
Their fondest lures, and Nature's nurturing lap
Hath each delight her tender care to crown,—
Trees, grass, and fruit, that swell with freshening sap.

XV.

The winding road bends gently through a mass
Of flushing beauties, gleaming in the light
Of golden Phœbus, who doth, ere he pass
To other lands, pour rays profusely bright
On every spot ; that, through the night's long hours,
They still within may glow with vital heat,
And when again he seeks their favour'd bowers
A sympathetic warmth his beam may greet !

XVI.

There break around me many a wildering sound (17)
Of rushing streams and waters dashing high ;
Scarce can my foot retain the mossy ground,
And massive cliffs rise grimly to the sky.
Dark, ivied oaks are drooping o'er my head,
With knotted trunks and foliage mingling dim ;
Beneath, the thundering cataract is spread,
And white, wave-spangling froth doth o'er it swim.

XVII.

The river, which in peace hath hither roved
With vagrant joy, singing itself to sleep
As on it sped through nooks and scenes it loved,
Turning sometimes, in fondling jest, to peep
Once more on beauties rare, which o'er its course
Redundant hang, and murmuring praises soft,
Till, startled from its trance by brawlings hoarse,
Now plunges headlong from its path aloft!

XVIII.

Severing its liquid waves, in sudden maze,
That all in tiny threads of silver run
Swift o'er each jutting peak; while quivering sprays
Leap sportive up, and sparkle in the sun
Their diamond showers, which half appear to hide
The strange, fantastic crag, whose broken ridge,
Lurking beneath, seems as in mouldering pride
The ruin'd arch of some far-spanning bridge;

XIX.

Or, like a crumbling doorway which doth close
The entrance to a world of airy sprites,
Who there, in lulling harmony, repose
When wearied of their rapid, feathery flights;
Perchance e'en now they nestle in the flowers
Which, glowing brightly, cluster high and low,
Creeping (through tardy day's long summer hours)
Around the rock's damp base, binding ofttimes its brow.

XX.

Once more the waters gather in a sheet
Of clear, broad crystal, whose fresh glories flash
Like lightning, till abysses, yawning, meet
The bounding torrent, when the currents lash
Themselves to swelling foam-clouds, and so fall,
Precipitately with a stunning cry, away!
Hurl'd 'neath the sheer, abruptly rising wall,
Which Nature rears as if to screen the day.

XXI.

Yet still the sunlight ventures here to dart
Through the small chasm that is cleft above,
Lingers around, as loathful to depart,
And draw aside the splendour of its love,
Making all beautiful, o'er which it flings
E'en momentary radiance! Horror fades
From ghastly peak or crevice where it clings
Gladly;—and, howling, seeks the shades,

XXII.

Where (as the superstitious cowering tell)
A spirit does at last in silence rest,
That did for years flit wildly through the dell,
And each recess and moaning tree infest.
Most turbulent in death, as once in life,
He haunted still this surge-distracted glen;
And, melancholy, gloried in the strife,
Unquiet yet, as when he mix'd with men!

XXIII.

Amid these scenes, Llewellyn—Cambria's boast—

In Dolwyddelan's towers beheld the light,

And still, like faithful warder at his post,

They guard his country with decaying might ;

As kindled by his presence, stern they stand,

In broken fragments, for his memory fills

Their lonely ruins and invites the hand

Of deathless fame, who oft amid these hills

XXIV.

Sighs with regret, to weave a circling veil

Of bays immortal, that may graceful shed

A vivifying aspect o'er the pale

And sinking fortress, where the solemn tread

Calls up low echoes, and with them awakes

Imagination, till a spectral crowd

Of things departed start from crumbling breaks,

And Fancy builds again each turret proud !

XXV.

Now whispering Night doth o'er my path descend,
 Lightly the breezes fan my wearied brow ;
Homeward my way-worn steps in silence bend,
 And numbers from my lyre refuse to flow.
Yet will I not forsake thee, cherish'd Wales !
 No ! still within thy boundaries I will rest,
Whence I may seek again thy smiling vales,
 And wander o'er thy heather-tinted breast.

XXVI.

Meantime, farewell, thy wilds and mountain home,
 And thy strange histories, springing from each glade,
Tempting the distant pilgrims forth to roam
 Within thy mid-day light or evening shade ;
And oft beguiling them to loiter long
 Amid thy witcheries, even as I love
To linger, all forgetful, in my song,
 Though Darkness waves its pinions vast above !

XXVII.

I turn to sigh, and sadly look again

On the dim fading of the mountains high,

To catch the last sounds of that fancied strain,

Which seems to float along the distant sky ;—

The music of a thousand streamlets blending

To bid the lingering *Saesones* (18) farewell ;

Responded by the lofty rocks defending

The treasured charms that in their empire dwell!



NOTES.



NOTES.

NOTE 1.—PAGE 6.

The wing of Death has brush'd the princely towers.

Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, the father of the present baronet, died in January 1840.

NOTE 2.—PAGE 8.

It rears its strength to honour Waterloo!

The Waterloo tower, erected by the late Sir W. W. Wynn to the memory of the heroes who fell at the battle of Waterloo.

NOTE 3.—PAGE 11.

The Soldier's Story.

For this anecdote I am indebted to the kindness of Captain Kincaid of the Rifle Brigade, who was present himself in almost every action

fought during the Peninsular War. When the French advanced to invade Portugal in 1810, it was part of the Duke of Wellington's plan of defence, that the inhabitants of the invaded provinces should abandon their homes and carry off every thing to prevent the enemy's profiting by the resources of the country. A proclamation was issued to that effect, but, as usual, the evil day was postponed until the foe was amongst them. The incident I have narrated, which arose out of it, contrasted strangely with the passing scene.

NOTE 4.—PAGE 31.

Yes, Dinas Bran!

“Castell Dinas Bran, whose remains nearly cover the summit of a vast, conoid hill, steeply sloped on every side. This is one of our primitive Welsh castles. In 1390 it was inhabited by a celebrated beauty, descended from the house of Tudor Trevor, and whose father probably held the castle under the Earls of Arundel. The name of the lady was Myfanwy Vechan; she made a conquest of Howel ap Einion Lygliaw, a celebrated bard, who composed an ode addressed to her.”—PENNANT'S *Wales*, vol. i. p. 38.

NOTE 5.—PAGE 34.

Ah! here at least our mighty Shakspeare's hand.

This tract of land, generally called the Glyndwrwy, contains the site of a palace which formerly belonged to Owen Glyndower, so celebrated in Welsh history, and one of the personages in Shakspeare's *Henry the Fourth*. At Corwen there is a beautiful hill behind the church, called Glyndower's Seat. He was believed by the English to employ the aid of

magic, and it is probable that, in order to become more terrific to his enemies, he himself insinuated his skill in spells and charms.

“Hollinshed relates that his father’s horses were found on the night of his birth up to their girths in blood—an omen, no doubt, of his son’s cruelty.”—THOMAS’S *Memoirs of Owen Glyndower*.

NOTE 6.—PAGE 37.

None richer than thine own, thou swelling strain.

The beautiful air of “Cader Idris,” composed by Mr. Parry, the celebrated Bardd Alaw.

NOTE 7.—PAGE 39.

Is it not hallowed?

Pennant derives the name of the Dee from Duw—divine, it having formerly been believed that the river foretold events by the change of its channel, and frequently increased miraculously without the interposition of rain. It is mentioned in history that the ancient Britons, when drawn up in battle array on its banks, were accustomed to kiss the earth, and then each soldier drank a small quantity of its waters ere they engaged with their Saxon foes.

NOTE 8.—PAGE 50.

*'Twas here, in years that long have pass'd away
To pale oblivion.*

“On the road from Aberglasslyn to Beddgelert a stone is pointed out, by the name of the Chair of Rhys Goch O’ryri, the famous mountain

bard, contemporary with Owen Glyndower. He used to compose his poems seated on this stone. He died about the year 1420, and was interred in the holy ground at Beddgelert, after escaping the vengeance of the English for inspiring the Welsh with the love of liberty, and animating them by his compositions into a long and gallant resistance to the galling yoke.”—PENNANT’S *Wales*, vol. ii. p. 363.

NOTE 9.—PAGE 56.

The Dreamer of Snowdon.

“Snowdon was held as sacred by the ancient Britons as Parnassus was by the Greeks, and Ida by the Cretans. It is still said, that whosoever slept upon Snowdon would wake inspired.”—PENNANT’S *Wales*, vol. ii. p. 344.

NOTE 10.—PAGE 62.

The spell of Awen never will depart.

“Awen is a word expressive of poetical rapture. There were among the Welsh certain persons whom they called Awenyddion. These persons, when consulted about any thing doubtful, inflamed with a high degree of enthusiasm, were, to all appearance, carried out of themselves, and seemed as if they were possessed by an invisible spirit. This property was bestowed upon them, as they fancied, in their sleep: at which time, according to Giraldus, it appeared to some of them as if new milk, or honey, was poured into their mouths; to others, as if a written scroll were put into them.”—WARRINGTON’S *History of Wales*.

NOTE 11.—PAGE 64.

Hark ! hark ! the morn has roused the eager hounds.

On quitting Beddgelert early in the morning, I was accidentally witness to the scene I have here described, which became the more interesting when considered as vividly recalling the legend which is said to have originated the name of this beautiful valley. We learn from tradition, that Llewellyn the Great, accompanied by his wife and children, took up their abode at Beddgelert during the hunting season. One day, while engaged in the chase, the prince was surprised by the absence of his favourite hound Gelert, which he had received from his father-in-law, King John. On returning home, he was met by his dog with every demonstration of pleasure; but, becoming alarmed at observing him covered with blood, he ran to the nursery, and there found his infant's cradle overturned and the ground all bloody. Believing the hound to have killed the child, he instantly drew his sword and slew him; but on removing the cradle, found beneath it his child alive, and a wolf dead, which, during the absence of the family, had entered the house, and been destroyed by the faithful dog. The prince was so much affected by the incident, that he built a tomb over his favourite's grave, whence the spot is still called Beddgelert, or the Grave of Gelert. To this anecdote I have only alluded, without relating it.

NOTE 12.—PAGE 71.

Fit dwelling for one desolate and lone.

“It was to this spot Vortigern, king of Britain, retired, when he found himself unable to contest with the treacherous Saxons, whom he had, in the year 449, invited into his country.”—PENNANT'S *Wales*, vol. ii.

NOTE 13.—PAGE 72.

What burst like thunder rolls and groans on high?

The traveller is often surprised and startled in this valley by a sound like thunder, which vibrates magnificently through the rocks, and is produced by the blasting of slate at the Dinorwic Quarry, situated at the end of the pass.

NOTE 14.—PAGE 73.

There is a huge and shapeless mass of stone.

“About two miles from Llanberis lies an immense fragment of rock, fallen from the Glyder Fawr. It is called the Cromlech; for, having accidentally descended on other stones, it remains lifted from the earth, with a hollow beneath, resembling one of those druidical antiquities. The length of the recumbent stone is sixty feet, the breadth forty-six, the thickness sixteen. The hollow is said to have been once occupied by an old woman, but now serves for a sheepfold.”—PENNANT’S *Wales*. It lies in a place termed Ynys Hettws—Hetty’s Island; and in the legend I have given of this lonely but interesting scene, I have taken the liberty of weaving with the imperfect and barren anecdote above quoted a tragical incident of more recent occurrence. I allude to the fate of little John Closs, who, being overtaken by a mist, perished in the snows upon Moel Eilio. The sketch of Hetty’s life is, therefore, almost entirely imaginary; no account of her real history, I believe, being recorded.

NOTE 15.—PAGE 97.

*Or a reproachful voice upon the gale,
From the old forest’s glories that have fled!*

“Snowdon was formerly a royal forest.”—PENNANT’S *Wales*, vol. ii.

NOTE 16.—PAGE 101.

Vortimer. — A Legend of the Saxon Conquest.

“Hengist, the Saxon, beginning to entertain views of a permanent settlement in the kingdom of Britain, invited over a fresh body of Saxons about the latter end of the year 450, among whom was the daughter of that prince, the beautiful Rowena, who, appearing before Vortigern, the British king, while he was feasting with her father, knelt before him, magnificently dressed, with a gold cup in her hand, and pledged him in the Saxon manner. The infatuated monarch, deeply fascinated by her charms, disregarded every obstacle which the dictates of honour, prudence, and religion, opposed to his wishes. He divorced his wife, the mother of his three sons, and married Rowena. The folly and crimes of Vortigern having rendered him an object of universal detestation, he was deposed, and the crown given to his eldest son, Vortimer. The talents of this prince fully justified the choice of his country. He vigorously opposed the Saxons, dispersed their fleet, and drove them into the Isle of Thanet. In this state of affairs, Rowena, incited by revenge, and anxious to regain the dignity she had lost, meditated the murder of Vortimer. For this purpose she engaged in her service, by promise of great reward, a young man, who, disguised as a gardener, appeared before the king one morning, while taking the air in his garden, and presented him with a nosegay of flowers sprinkled with poison. As soon as the king was sensible that death was inevitable, he called into his presence the British nobility, and, exhorting them to a manly defence of their country, required them to bury him on the sea-shore at the port where the Saxons usually landed, in the hopes his remains might infuse the same terror that he did when alive.”—WARRINGTON’S *History of Wales*.

NOTE 17.—PAGE 117.

*There break around me many a wildering sound
Of rushing streams.*

“The celebrated cataract, Rhaiadr y Wennol, or the Spout of the

Swallow. The country people have a tradition that Sir John Wynn, the compiler of the Memoirs, who died in 1626, was a great oppressor, and believed that his perturbed spirit haunted this glen. They at length laid it to rest in the depths of the lower fall."—PENNANT'S *Wales*.

NOTE 18.—PAGE 123.

To bid the lingering Saesones farewell.

Saesones—An Englishwoman in the Welsh language.

THE END.

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VOYAGE

PITTORESQUE ET ARCHÉOLOGIQUE

DANS

LA PROVINCE D'YUCATAN

(AMÉRIQUE CENTRALE),

PENDANT LES ANNÉES 1834 ET 1836,

PAR FRÉDÉRIC DE WALDECK,

DÉDIÉ

A LA MÉMOIRE DU VICOMTE KINGSBOROUGH.

PROSPECTUS.

Si tous les voyageurs avaient la science qui guide l'observation, et le courage qui affronte tous les dangers ; si, au désir instinctif des excursions lointaines, ils joignaient des connaissances spéciales et variées, le monde serait aujourd'hui mieux connu qu'il ne l'est, et tant d'erreurs, autrefois accréditées par l'ignorance et la mauvaise foi, n'auraient plus cours parmi les gens qui se piquent d'érudition. Malheureusement il n'en est pas ainsi ; la facilité des communications de peuple à peuple sollicite à de longues pérégrinations une foule d'individus qu'une curiosité stérile et le besoin d'émotions toujours nouvelles engagent seuls à abandonner leur patrie. Aussi les bonnes relations de voyages sont-elles devenues singulièrement rares. Certes, on peut citer des hommes à existence aventureuse, qui se sont récemment acquis, en France et en Angleterre, une illustration méritée ; mais ces réputations se comptent ; encore en est-il qui ne résisteraient pas à un examen sévère.

Certains pays surtout exigent, pour leur exploration, des qualités qui se rencontrent rarement réunies dans la même personne. Ce sont ceux qui, outre des mœurs excentriques et des sites pittoresques, offrent d'éloquentes ruines, rappellent d'intéressants souvenirs historiques, abondent en richesses naturelles et en monuments littéraires de tout genre. Pour comprendre le langage muet de ces débris, pour suivre la trace de ces traditions, pour exploiter avec profit ces trésors physiques et intellectuels, il faut s'aider de tout ce qui peut donner la clef de tant de mystères ; archéologie, histoire, sciences naturelles, littérature, langues anciennes et modernes, il faut tout connaître, tout embrasser. Les lacunes qui existent dans l'intelligence ou le savoir du voyageur se retrouvent dans le récit de ses lointaines recherches. Son œuvre n'est complète qu'autant que son esprit l'est lui-même.

La partie de l'Amérique centrale qu'a parcourue M. Frédéric de Waldeck, est une de ces contrées dont l'étude ne peut être tentée par tout le monde. Nature majestueuse, magnifiques vestiges d'une grandeur éclipsée, idiomes riches et séculaires, souvenirs de toute espèce, productions merveilleuses, tout y est digne de fixer l'attention du savant et de l'artiste. M. de Waldeck ne l'ignorait pas. Aussi n'a-t-il entrepris ce difficile pèlerinage qu'après avoir

consulté ses forces, et s'être assuré qu'il était à la hauteur de la tâche qu'il s'imposait. Le public sera bientôt à même de juger s'il avait trop présumé de son courage et de ses lumières.

La province de l'Yucatan, dépendante de la république Mexicaine, est encore si peu connue, que les meilleures cartes n'indiquent qu'un petit nombre de points sur les côtes, et les trois villes de Mérida, Valladolid et Bacalar à l'intérieur. Pourtant, cette intéressante portion du nouveau monde méritait une part plus large dans la science géographique. La péninsule d'Yucatan a près de 10,000 lieues de superficie, et une population de 600,000 âmes, éparses dans 240 villages. En outre, elle est plus riche en monuments bien conservés que toutes les autres parties du continent Américain ; ce qui le prouve, c'est que M. de Waldeck y a découvert cinq grandes villes en ruine, à peine connues des habitants eux-mêmes.

Et dans ces cités en débris, que de trésors ignorés, que d'éléments précieux pour l'histoire générale de cette terre vouée au malheur ! Qu'on se figure, par exemple, un terrain de huit lieues d'étendue du Nord au Sud et d'une lieue de l'Est à l'Ouest, parsemé de décombres majestueux d'une architecture fantastique et admirable par les détails. C'est la ville d'Ytzalane, la plus grande de celles que M. de Waldeck a découvertes et explorées.

C'est au milieu de ces témoignages vénérables de l'antique splendeur de la patrie de Montézuma, que M. de Waldeck a recueilli les matériaux de l'immense ouvrage dont il prépare la publication.* Tous les dessins qui accompagneront le texte, et dont le nombre est considérable, il les a exécutés sur les lieux mêmes, en face des monuments dont il a reproduit l'image. Du fond de la chaumière qu'il s'était construite au milieu de cette forêt de ruines, M. de Waldeck a représenté avec sa plume et son pinceau la nature Mexicaine dans toute sa poétique vérité.

Les mœurs, les usages, les arts et les métiers des Yucatèques actuels, l'agriculture, l'histoire, la statistique du pays, occupent une grande partie de l'ouvrage. Des anecdotes piquantes y sont semées avec goût et discernement. Ça et là, un fragment descriptif ou littéraire, tel qu'un petit poème ou ballade historique des Mayas au temps de la conquête, document précieux qui jette une vive lumière sur le passé de ces peuples si dégénérés ; plus loin, un aperçu sur les produits et les denrées commerciales du pays ; une notice sur la soumission des Ytzaexes dans l'île de Peten, dernier point de la province qui résista aux Espagnols et qui fut conquis, en 1697 seulement, par le gouverneur don Martin de Ursua ; puis la célèbre prophétie du grand prêtre Chilam-Ballam, qui, 100 ans avant l'arrivée des Espagnols, prêcha la religion du Christ ; enfin un vocabulaire de la langue Maya, pour faciliter aux voyageurs à venir l'intelligence des idiomes de ces peuples.

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| <p>Pl. 1. Carte générale de l'Yucatan avec Walis.</p> <p>2. Costume des femmes de Cam-pêche.</p> <p>3. Costume des soldats de la milice.</p> <p>4. Costume des Mestices de Mérida.</p> <p>5. Indien contrebandier de l'intérieur.</p> <p>6. Manière de voyager dans l'Yucatan.</p> <p>7. Costume de majordome des fermes.</p> <p>8. Carte et plan d'une partie des ruines d'Ytzalane.</p> <p>9. Plan de la pyramide de Kingsborough.</p> <p>10. Elévation de la pyramide de Kingsborough.</p> <p>11. Etude d'une partie de cet édifice, coupe des pierres.</p> | <p>Pl. 12. Plan du grand carré des 4 temples</p> <p>13. Façade du temple aux deux serpents.</p> <p>14. Façade du temple aux asterismes.</p> <p>15. Façade du temple du soleil.</p> <p>16. Etude d'une partie du temple du soleil.</p> <p>17. Etude d'une partie du temple aux asterismes.</p> <p>18. Planche de détails de l'édifice aux deux serpents.</p> <p>19. Ces trois planches sont des terres</p> <p>20. cuites trouvées dans les ruines</p> <p>21. de l'antique ville de Tulhà ou Ocozingo à 32 lieues des ruines de Palenqué.</p> <p>22. Bas relief Astronomique des ruines de Palenqué.</p> |
|--|--|

“ M. de Waldeck, qui a consacré douze années de sa vie à l'Exploration et à l'étude des antiquités mexicaines, vient de faire connaître au public le résultat de ses travaux en publiant la relation de son “ VOYAGE DANS L'YUCATAN (Amérique Centrale) et AUX RUINES D'ITZALANE.”

M. de Waldeck, pour examiner en pleine connaissance de cause les curieux débris dont le sol du Mexique est semé s'est initié aux principaux idiômes du pays, aux mœurs de ses habitants, et à cette portion de leur histoire que révèlent les manuscrits hiéroglyphiques dont nul jusqu'à ce moment n'avait retrouvé la clé. On conçoit que de pareils préliminaires aient donné à M. de Waldeck une grande supériorité sur les voyageurs qui l'avaient précédé dans la république mexicaine. Mais ce qui surtout constitue cette supériorité, c'est l'habileté du crayon et du pinceau de M. de Waldeck et sa science comme mathématicien et architecte.

Les monuments d'Itzalane, dont il est question dans l'ouvrage qu'on annonce aujourd'hui, n'étaient pas connus en Europe. A peine les géographes en avaient-ils fait mention, et encore ce qu'ils en avaient dit, était-il généralement erroné. M. de Waldeck a l'honneur d'avoir le premier soulevé ce coin du voile qui dérobe à nos yeux le passé de l'antique nation Maya.

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On trouvera à la fin du texte un vocabulaire de la langue Maya, à l'usage des personnes qui visiteront plus tard la péninsule d'Yucatan.

M. de Waldeck publiera par la suite un grand ouvrage sur les antiquités de Palenqué qu'il a étudiées avec prédilection. Déjà le monde scientifique a pu apprécier le mérite de ses longues investigations. La société géographique de Londres, qui compte parmi ses membres tant d'hommes éminents, lui a donné un témoignage de sa satisfaction et de sa reconnaissance en l'admettant dans son sein. La Société géographique de France n'est pas restée en arrière ; elle a decerné à l'intrépide voyageur une médaille spéciale, distinction flatteuse qui dit assez de quelle importance sont les travaux et les nombreux dessins de M. Waldeck.

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